

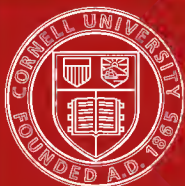
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NORMAN MAURICE:

OR,

THE MAN OF THE PEOPLE.

An American Drama.

BY

W. GILMORE SIMMS, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF "THE YEMASSEE," "KATHARINE WALTON," ETC.

FOURTH EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

PHILADELPHIA:
LIPPINCOTT, GRAMBO, & CO.
1853.

A538569

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W. GILMORE SIMMS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the District of
South Carolina.

TO
HENRY GOURDIN, ESQ.

OF SOUTH-CAROLINA,

I INSCRIBE THIS DRAMA.

THE AUTHOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

NORMAN MAURICE.

ROBERT WARREN, *his kinsman and enemy.*

RICHARD OSBORNE, *an attorney and creature of Warren.*

HARRY MATTHEWS, *a friend of Warren.*

COL. BLASINGHAME, *a fire-eater.*

BEN FERGUSON, *a leading politician.*

COL. MERCER, } *Politicians of opposite party.*

COL. BROOKS, }

MAJOR SAVAGE, *friend of Blasinghame.*

CAPT. CATESBY, U. S. A., *friend of Maurice.*

Citizens, Lawyers, &c.

MRS. JERVAS, *a widow.*

CLARICE DELANCY, *her niece, afterwards wife to Maurice.*

WIDOW PRESSLEY, *a client of Maurice.*

KATE PRESSLEY, *her grand-daughter.*

BIDDY, *a servant girl.*

SCENE—First, in Philadelphia ; afterwards, in Missouri.

NORMAN MAURICE.

ACT 1.—SCENE 1.

A parlour in the house of Mrs. Jervas, in Walnut street, Philadelphia. Mrs. Jervas and Robert Warren discovered—the latter entering hastily and with discomposure.

Mrs. Jervas, [eagerly.] Well?

Warren. It is *not* well! 'Tis ill! She has refused me!

Mrs. J. Has she then dared?

Warren. Ay, has she! Something farther—

She does not scruple to avow her passion

For my most worthy cousin, Norman Maurice.

Mrs. J. She shall repent it—she shall *disavow* it,
Or she shall know!—I'll teach her!—

Warren. She's a pupil

With will enough of her own to vex a master!

Mrs. J. I have a will too which shall master her!
Is she not mine?—my sister's child?—a beggar,
That breathes but by my charity! I'll teach her,
And she shall learn the lesson set for her,

Or I will turn her naked into the streets,
As penniless as she came. But, wait and see,—
You shall behold—

Warren. Nay, wait 'till I am gone,
Then use your best severity. She needs it—
Has no sufficient notion of her duty,
And—

Mrs. J. No, indeed !

Warren. But you must make her wiser.

Mrs. J. I will !

I've treated her too tenderly !

Warren. But show her
Some little glimpse of the danger in her path,—
Shame and starvation—

Mrs. J. She deserves them both.

Warren. And keep my worthy cousin from her presence.

Mrs. J. He darks these doors no more ! The girl, already,
Has orders to deny him.

Warren. You've done wisely.
A little time,—but keep them separate,—
And we shall conquer her;—ay, conquer *him* too,
For I've a little snare within whose meshes
His feet are sure to fall.

Mrs. J. What snare ?

Warren. No matter !
Be ignorant of the mischief 'till it's over,
And we enjoy its fruits ! Meanwhile, be busy,—
Pursue the plan you purpose, and to-morrow,
We shall know farther. I shall use the moments,
'Twixt this and then, in labours which must profit,
Or fortune grows perverse. See you to *her*,
While I take care of *him*.

Mrs. J. Oh, never fear me—

I'll summon her the moment you are gone,
And she shall know—

Warren. That you may summon her—
For we must lose no time,—I take my leave.

Ex. Warren.

Mrs. J. The pert and insolent baggage! But I'll teach her!
I'll let her know from whose benevolent hand
She eats the bread of charity—whose mercy
It is, that clothes her nakedness with warmth.

[Rings. Enter Biddy.]

Go, Biddy!—send my niece to me. *[Ex. Biddy.]* A beggar,
That fain would be a chooser!—So, Miss!

Enter Clarice.

Clarice. Dear Aunt!

Mrs. J. Ay, you would *dare* me in another fashion,
But you have met your match; and now I tell you,
Clarice Delancy, 'tis in vain you struggle—

Clarice. What *have* I done?

Mrs. J. Oh! you are ignorant,
And innocent seeming as the babe unborn,
If tongue and face could speak for secret conscience,
That harbors what it should not. So, you dare
Avow a passion for that beggarly Maurice,
Whom I've forbid the house!

Clarice. Forbidden Maurice!

Mrs. J. Ay, indeed! forbid!

Clarice. In what has he offended?

Mrs. J. His poverty offends me—his presumption.

Clarice. Presumption!

Mrs. J. He has the audacity to think of you
In marriage—he would heir my property;—
The miserable beggar! who, but lately—

Clarice. And, if the humble Clarice might presume,
There were no fitter husband ! From the Fates
I do entreat no happier destiny
Than but to share, o'er all that wealth may proffer,
The beggary that he brings !

Mrs. J. But you shall never !
I am your guardian, in the place of mother,
And I will turn you naked from these doors
If you but dare—

Clarice. Ah ! that *were* guardianship,
Becoming the dear sister of a mother,
Who, when she left her hapless child to earth,
Ne'er dream'd of such remembrance, in the future,
Of what besem'd the past. I've anger'd you,
But cannot chide myself because my nature
Does not revolt at homage of a being
In whom no virtue starves. Suppose him poor !
Wealth makes no certain happiness to hope,
Nor poverty its loss. In Norman Maurice
I see a nobleness that still atones for
The lowly fortunes that offend your pride.
None richer lives in rarest qualities,—
More precious to the soul that feeds on worth,
Than all your city glitter. Do you think
To win me from a feast of such delights,
To the poor fare on common things that make
The wealth of Robert Warren ? Madam—my aunt,—
I thank you for the bounty you have shown me !
It had been precious o'er most earthly things,
But that it hath its price, at perilous cost
To things more precious still. Your charity,
That found a shelter for this humble person,
Were all too costly, if it claims in turn

This poor heart's sacrifice. I *cannot* make it!
I will *not* wed this Warren,—for I *know* him—
And, if it be that I shall ever wed,
Will wed with Norman Maurice—as a man,
Whom most it glads me that I also know.

Mrs. J. Never shall you wed with *him* while I have pow'r
To keep you from such folly. You're an infant,
That knows not what is needful for your safety,
Or precious for your heart. Be ruled by me,
Or forth you pack. I cut you off forever,
From fortune as from favour.

Clarice. Welcome death,
Sooner than bonds like these!

Mrs. J. Ungrateful girl!
And this is the return for all my bounty?
But you shall not achieve your own destruction,
If I can help it. This Maurice never darkens
My dwelling with his shadow. He hath made you
Perverse and disobedient—but he shall not
Thrive by your ruin. See that you prepare
To marry Robert Warren.

Clarice. With the grave first!—
Its cold and silence, and its crawling things,
Loathsome, that make us shudder but to think on,
Sooner than he!—a base, unworthy creature,
Who steals between his kinsman and the friend,
That gave him highest trust and held him faithful,
To rob him of the treasure he most values.
The reptile that keeps empire in the grave
Sooner than he, shall glide into this bosom,
And make it all his own.

Mrs. J. Silence, I say!—
Before I madden with your insolence,

And lose the memory of that sainted sister
That left you in my trust.

Clarice. My poor, dear mother!

She never dream'd of this, in that dark hour
That lost me to her own!

Mrs. J. I'm in her place,

To sway your foolish fancies with a prudence
You will not know yourself. Once more I tell you,
You wed with Warren—Robert Warren, only!

This Maurice— [*noise without*] Ha! That noise?—

Maurice, [*in the hall without.*] I must, my girl!

Clarice. 'Tis Maurice now.

Mrs. J. The Insolent! will he dare!

Biddy, [*in the hall without.*] Mrs. Jervas says, sir—

Maurice, [*without.*] Ay! ay! she says!—

But when a lady means civilities,

'Tis still my custom to do justice to her,

By seeking them in person. There, my good girl,

You've done your duty as you should. Now, please you,

I will do mine. [*Entering the room.*] Madam—

Mrs. J. Was ever insolence—

Biddy, [*entering.*] Mr. Maurice would, ma'am.

Mrs. J. This conduct, sir—

Maurice. Would be without its plea at common seasons,

And he whose purpose was a morning visit,

The simply social object of the idler,

Who finds in his own time and company

The very worst offence, could offer nothing,

To plead for his intrusion on that presence,

Which, so politely, shuts the door against him.

Mrs. J. Well, sir?

Maurice. But I am none of these.

Mrs. J. What plea, sir?—

Maurice. Some natures have their privilege—some passions
Demand a hearing. There are rights of feeling,
 That art can never stifle—griefs, affections,
 That never hear the civil “Not at home!”
 When home itself is perill’d by submission.
 He’s but a haggard that obeys the check,
 When all that’s precious to his stake of life
 Is fastened on the string. Necessity
 Makes bold to ope the door which fashion’s portress
 Would bolt and bar against him. ’Tis *my* fate,
 That prompts me to a rudeness, which my nurture
 Would else have shrunk from. But that I have rights
 Which move me to defiance of all custom,
 I had not vex’d your presence.

Mrs. J. Rights, sir—rights?

Maurice. Ay, madam, the most precious to the mortal!
 Rights of the heart, which make the heart immortal
 In those affections which still show to earth,
 The only glimpses we have left of Eden.
 Behold in her, [*pointing to Clarice,*] my best apology—
 One, whom to gaze on silences complaint,
 And justifies the audacity that proves
 Its manhood in its error. Clarice, my love,
 Is there in any corner of your heart
 An echo to the will that says to Maurice,
 Your presence here is hateful? [*Takes her hand.*]

Clarice. Can you ask?

Maurice. Enough!—

Mrs. J. Too much, I say, Let go her hand,
 And leave this dwelling, sir! I’m mistress here;
 And shall take measures for security
 Against this lawless insolence.

Maurice. Awhile! Awhile!

You *are* the mistress here ;—I *will* obey you ;—
 Will leave your presence, madam, never more
 To trouble you with mine. You now deny me
 The privilege, that never act of mine
 Hath properly made forfeit. You behold me
 The suitor to your niece. You hear her language,—
 How different from your own—that, with its bounty
 Makes rich my heart with all the gifts in hers !
 Sternly, you wrest authority from judgment,
 To exercise a will that puts to scorn
 Her hopes no less than mine ! I would have pleaded
 Your calm return to judgment ;—would entreat you
 To thoughts of better favour that might sanction,
 With the sweet blessing of maternal love,
 The mutual passion living in our hearts ;
 But that I know how profitless the pleading,
 Which, in the ear of prejudice, would soften
 The incorrigible wax that deafens pride.
 I plead not for indulgence—will *not* argue
 The cruelty that finds in charity
 Commission for that matchless tyranny
 That claims the right to break the orphan's heart
 Because it finds her bread.

Clarice, [*aside to Norman*.] Spare her, Norman.

Maurice, [*aside to Clarice*.] Oh ! Will I not ! Yet wherefore
 need I spare,

When, if the Holy Law be not a mock,
 The justice which must break this heart of stone,
 Will send her howling through eternity.
 'Twere mercy, which in season speaks the truth,
 That, in the foretaste of sure penalties,
 May terrify the offender from his path,
 And send him to his knees.

Clarice, [*aside to Maurice*.] For my sake, Norman.

Maurice, [*to Mrs. J.*] Yet, madam, in this freeest use of pow'r,
Which drives me hence, be merciful awhile,
And, if this heart, so dearly link'd with mine,
Through love and faith unperishing, must turn
Its fountains from that precious overflow
That kept my flow'rs in bloom—yet, ere the word,
That leaves me sterile ever thence, be said,
Suffer us, apart awhile, to speak of parting!
Words of such import still ask fewest ears,
And words of grief and hopelessness like ours,
Must needs have utterance in such lowly tones,
As best declare the condition of the heart,
That's muffled for despair. But a few moments
We'll walk apart together.

Mrs. J.

It is useless!

What needs—

Maurice. What need of sorrow ever? Could earth speak,
Prescribing laws to that Divinity,
That still smites rock to water, we should hear,
The universal voice of that one plea,
That claims for man immunity from troubles
Which make proud eyes o'erflow. Who should persuade
His fellow to opinion of the uses
That follow from his tears? What school, or teacher,
Would seek to show that chemistry had art,
To fix and harden the dilating drops
To brilliants as they fall,—such as no crown
In Europe might affect? One finds no succour,
Sovereign to break the chain about his wrist,
From all the fountains that o'ersluice the heart;
Yet will he weep, though useless. He who stands,
Waiting upon the scaffold for the signal,

That flings him down the abyss, still hoards each minute
 That niggard fate allows. That single minute
 Still shrines a hope ;—if not a hope, a feeling,
 That finds a something precious even in pain,
 And will not lose the anxiety that racks him,
 Lest he make forfeit of a something better
 Which yet he cannot name. And, at the last,
 I, whom you doom to loss of more than life,
 May well implore the respite of a moment,
 If but to suffer me to count once more,
 The treasure that I lose. A moment, madam ?

Mrs. J. [*walks up the stage.*] A single moment, then.

Maurice. Oh ! you are gracious !

A single moment is a boundless blessing
 To him you rob of time ! Clarice, my love.

Clarice. My Norman !

Maurice. Oh ! is it thus, my Clarice—is it thus ?

Clarice. We have been children, Norman, in our dreams
 We are the sport of fate !

Maurice. And shall be ever,
 If that there be no courage in our hearts
 To shape the fates to favour by our will.

Clarice. What mean you, Norman ?

Maurice. What should Norman mean,
 But, if he can, to grapple with his fortune,
 And, like a sturdy wrestler in the ring,
 Throw heart and hope into the perilous struggle ?
 What should I mean but happiness for thee,—
 Thou willing, as myself ? Who strives with fate,
 Must still, like him, the mighty Macedonian,
 Seize the coy priestess by the wrist, and lead her
 Where yet she would not go ! Suppose me faithful
 To the sweet passion I have tender'd you,

And what remains in this necessity,
But that, made resolute by grim denial,
I challenge from your love sufficient courage,
To take the risks of mine!

Clarice. Within your eye
A meaning more significant than your words,
Would teach me still to tremble. That I love you,
You doubt not, Norman! That my heart hath courage
To match the love it feels for you—

Maurice. It hath—it hath!
If that the love be there, as I believe it,
That love will bring, to nourish needful strength,
A virtue that makes love a thing of soul,
And arms its will with wings. Oh! read you not,
My meaning—

Mrs. J. [approaching.] Your moment is a long one, sir.

Maurice. Ah, madam!
Who chides the executioner when he suffers
The victim his last words—though still he lingers
Ere he would reach the last? But a few moments,
And I have spoken all that my full heart
Might not contain with safety.

Mrs. J. [retiring up the stage.] Be it so, sir.

Maurice. You hear, my Clarice. We've another moment:
But one, it seems, unless your resolution
Takes its complexion from the fate that threatens
And shows an equal will. If then, in truth,
You love me—

Clarice. Oh! look not thus!

Maurice. I doubt not;—
And yet, dear Clarice, if indeed you love me,
The single moment that this woman gives us,
Becomes a life;—to me, of happiness,—

To thee, as full of happiness as thou
Might hope to gain from me. She would deny us,—
Would wed thee to that subtle Robert Warren—

Clarice. I'll perish first!

Maurice. No need of perishing
When I can bring thee to security.
I knew thy straits—the tyranny which thou suffer'st
Because of thy dependence; and my struggle,
Since this conviction reached me—day and night—
Was, that I might from this condition snatch thee,
And, in thy happier fortunes, find mine own!
I have prepared for this.

Clarice. What would'st thou, Norman?

Mrs. J., [*approaching.*] Your moments fly.

Maurice. I soon shall follow them.

Mrs. J., [*retiring again.*] The sooner, sir, the better.

Maurice. She would spare me,
The argument which shows thee what is needful.

Clarice. Speak! I have courage equal to my love!

Maurice. I try thee though I doubt not! If thou lov'st me,
Thou'lt yield, without a question, to my purpose,
And give me all thy trust.

Clarice. Will I not, Norman?

Maurice. Then, with the night, I make thee mine, Clarice!—
Steal forth at evening. There shall be a carriage,
And my good hostess, whom thou know'st, in waiting.
Our future home is ready.

Clarice. Let me think, Norman?

Maurice. That's as your excellent aunt, who now approaches,
May please:—but, surely, when to my fond pleading
You sweetly vow'd yourself as mine alone,
The proper thought that sanctions my entreaty
Was all complete and perfect.

Clarice. But Norman how—
How should I, in your poverty, eucumber.
Your cares with a new burden?

Maurice. There is no poverty,
Which the true courage, and the bold endeavour,
The honest purpose, the enduring heart,
Crowned with a love that blesses while it burdens,
May not defy in such a land as ours!
We'll have but few wants having one another!—
And for these wants, some dawning smiles of fortune
Already have prepared me. Trust me, Clarice,
I will not take thee to a worse condition,
In one whose charities shall never peril
The affections they should foster.

Mrs. J. [approaching] Sir,—again!

Maurice. Yes, yes—most excellent madam—yes—again!
There's but a single syllable between us,
Your niece hath left unspoken.—My Clarice!

Clarice. I'm thine!

Maurice. 'Tis spoken!

And now I live again!

Mrs. J. Well sir—art done at last?

Maurice. Done! Ay, madam—done!
You've held me narrowly to a strict account—
And yet, I thank you. You've been merciful
After a fashion which invokes no justice,
And yet may find it, madam. Yet—I thank you!
The word *is* said that's needful to our parting;
And that I do not in despair depart,
Is due to these last moments. Fare you well!
Be you as safe, henceforth, from all intrusion,
As you shall be from mine. Clarice—farewell!

Clarice. Norman.

Maurice, [embracing her.] But one embrace!

Mrs. J. Away, sir.

Maurice. In earnest of those pleasant bonds hereafter,
That none shall dare gainsay. *Clarice*—Remember!

[*Exit Maurice.*]

Clarice. Go, Norman, and believe me.

Mrs. J. Get you in!

Exeunt.

SCENE II.

A Lawyer's office in Philadelphia. Richard Osborne at a desk writing.

Enter Robert Warren.

Warren, [eagerly.] Hast drawn the paper, *Osborne*?

Osborne. It is here.

Warren. The copy this?—

Osborne. And this the original.

Warren, [examining papers.] 'Tis very like! You've done
it famously:

One knows not which is which; and Norman Maurice,
Himself, would struggle vainly to discover
The difference 'twixt the words himself hath written,
And these your skill hath copied to a hair.
We shall deceive him.

Osborne. Why would you deceive him?

Warren. Eh! Why? It is my instinct! Are you answer'd?
I hate him! Would you have a better answer?

Osborne. Why hate him when his kindness still have served you?

This very obligation which hath bound him,
And given us cruel power o'er his fortunes,—
His purse—perhaps his honour—

Warren. Why, perhaps?

Is it doubtful, think you, that this fatal writing,
Made public,—will disgrace him?

Osborne. An error only,—

The thoughtless sport of boyhood—wholly guiltless
Of all dishonest purpose, We have used it,—
You rather—and the profit has been ours!—
Why, if he pays the money as he proffers,
Why treasure still this paper? More—why hate him?

Warren. Let it suffice you that I have my reasons!—
And let me tell you, Osborne, that I love not
This sympathy which you show for Norman Maurice.
Beware! who goes not with me is against me!

Osborne. I'm in your power, I know—

Warren. Then let your wisdom
Abate its fond pretension as my teacher!
I'm better pleased with service than tuition;
Will hold you as my ally, not my master!
I have remarked, of late, that you discover
Rare virtues in my cousin! He hath fee'd you;
Employed you as attorney in his cases—

Osborne. Not more than other counsellors.

Warren. No matter!

It is enough that you are mine!

Osborne. This jealousy—

Warren. Is only vigilance! Each look of favour,
Bestow'd on him I loathe, is disaffection
In him that's bound to me.

Osborne. This document?—

Warren. The *real* one,—the *original*—is mine;

The *copy* you will yield him when he pays you ;—
That he will do so, now, I make no question,
Though where his money comes from is my wonder.

Osborne. The case of Jones & Peters, just determined,
Brings him large fees. Another action,
The insurance case of Ferguson & Brooks,
Secures him handsome profits. Other cases,
Have lately brought him, with new reputation,
Liberal returns of money.

Warren. We'll have all !
See that you pile the costs—crowd interest—
Expense of service ; tax to the uttermost
The value of your silence and forbearance—
Leave nothing you have done without full charges,
While, what has been forborne, more highly rated,
Shall sweep the remaining eagles from his purse.

Osborne. What bitterness is yours !

Warren. Oh ! quite ungracious,
Contrasted with the sweetness of your moods !
Once more, beware ! Do as I bid you, Osborne,
Or you shall feel me. Yield him up this *copy*,
Which we shall see him, with delirious rapture,
Thrust in the blazing furnace,—little dreaming,
That still the damning scrawl that blasts his honour,
Lies here, in the possession of his foe !

Osborne. Will nothing move you, Warren ?

Warren. His funeral only,—
To follow—while above his burial place,
I show this fatal paper,—still lamenting
That one with so much talent should have falter'd,
When virtue cried "Be firm !"—O ! I will sorrow,
So deeply o'er his sad infirmity,
That they who come to weep above his grave,

Will turn from it in scorn. But, get you ready ;—
You'll sup with me ; and afterwards we'll seek him.
We must look smiling then as summer flowers,
Nor show the serpent crouching in the leaves. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.

Evening : Chestnut Street. Enter Maurice with Clarice.

Maurice. Thou'rt mine, my Clarice.

Clarice. Wholly thine, my husband.

Maurice. Now let the furies clamour as they may,
That the capricious fortune which had mock'd
Our blessings with denial, has been baffled
By the true nobleness of that human will,
Which, when the grim necessity looks worst,
Can fearlessly resolve to brave its fate.
Thou'rt mine, and all grows suppliant in my path,
That lately looked defiance. We are one !—
This is our dwelling, Clarice :—let us in.

[*They enter the house of Maurice.*

SCENE IV.

The parlour of a dwelling in the residence of Maurice, handsomely and newly furnished. Enter Warren and Osborne.

Warren. I am amazed.

Osborne. 'Tis certainly a change

From his old lodging house in Cedar street.

Warren. His run of luck hath crazed him, and he fancies
The world is in his string.

Osborne. He's not far wrong !
His arguments have made a great impression ;
Their subtlety and closeness, and the power
Of clear and forcible development,
Which seems most native to his faculty !
He was born an orator ! With such a person—
A voice to glide from thunder into music,
A form and face so full of majesty,
Yet, with such frankness and simplicity,—
So much to please, and so commanding—

Warren. Pshaw !—
You prate as do the newspapers, with a jargon
Of wretched common-place, bestuffed with phrases,
That, weighed against the ballad of an idiot,
Would show less burden and significance.
We'll spoil his fortunes—

Osborne. Hark ! He comes.

Warren. Be firm now !
See that you do it manfully—no halting.—

Osborne. You still persist, then ?

Warren. Ay ! when I have him here. [*touching his breast.*]

Enter Norman Maurice.

Maurice. Be seated, sirs.
You bring with you the paper ? [*To Osborne.*

Osborne. It is here, sir. [*Giving copy of document.*
And here the separate claim—the costs and charges.

Maurice. 'Tis well ! This first !—I pay this money, sir,
In liquidation of this wretched paper,
To which my hand appears, and, for which writing,
The world, unconscious of the facts, might hold me

A most unhappy criminal. Your knowledge
Includes this person's agency—my cousin—
As still, in moments of insidious fondness,
It is his wont to call me.

Warren. Norman, nay!

Maurice. [*impatiently to Warren.*] Awhile, awhile, sir! we
shall deal directly!—

I said [*to Osborne,*] your knowledge of this boyish error,
Betrayed the agency of Robert Warren,
Which does not here appear. He made *that* guilty
Which in itself was innocent. These moneys,
Procured by him upon this document,
Were all by him consumed. You were his agent,
Perhaps as ignorant of his vicious deed,
As I, who am its victim. Was it so, sir?

Osborne. I sold for him the bill, sir, knowing nothing,
And still believed it genuine.

Maurice. He will tell you,
That, what I utter of his agency,
In this insane and inconsiderate act,
Is true as Holy Writ! Speak, Robert Warren!

Warren. I have admitted it already, Norman.

Maurice. [*To Osborne.*] Be you the witness of his words
hereafter.

Here is your money,—and I take this paper,
The proof of boyish error and misfortune,
But not of crime, in me. Thus, let it perish,
With that confiding and believing nature,
Which gave me to the power of one so base! [*putting it in the
fire, and putting his foot on it while it burns.*]

Warren. Norman! Cousin!

Maurice. You cozen me no more!
And if your agent has the wit to gather,

A lesson from your faithlessness to me,
You will not cozen him. Take counsel sir,
And never trust this man! [*To Osborne.*]

Warren. Norman Maurice!

Maurice. [*To Osborne*] Our business ends! Will it please
you, leave us now!

[*Exit Osborne: Warren is about to follow when Maurice lays
his hand on his shoulder.*]

Maurice. Stay you! There must be other words before we part
Not many, but most needful.

Warren. Let me pray you,
To fashion them in less offensive spirit.

Maurice. Why, so I should, could I suppose one virtue,
A life to leaven a dense mass of vices,
Remain'd within your bosom. You *shall* listen
Though every syllable should be a sting!
'Twould not offend me greatly, Robert Warren,
If, as I brand thy baseness on thy forehead,
Thy heart, with courage born of just resentment,
Should move thee to defiance! It would glad me,
In sudden strife, to put a proper finish,
To thy deep, secret, foul hostility.

Warren. You have no reason for this cruel language.

Maurice. Look on me as thou say'st the monstrous falsehood;
But lift thine eye to mine—and, if thy glance
Can brazen out the loathing in mine own,
I will forgive thee all! Thou dar'st not do it!
No reason, say'st thou?—Thou, whose arrant cunning,
Hath taken the profits of three toilsome years
To pay thy wage of sin,—and smutch'd my garments,
That else had known no stain!

Warren. Have I not
Confess'd that wrong and folly?—

Maurice. Wert repentant,
When making thy confession—

Warren. So I am !

Maurice. Traitor ! I know thee better ! Thy confession
But followed on detection ! While thou mad'st it,
The busy devil, dwelling in thy heart,
Was framing other schemes of crime and hatred,
Outbraving all the past. Ev'n while my pity
Was taking thee to mercy, thou wast planning
New evil to my fortunes !

Warren. Never, Norman !
By Heaven ! you do me wrong.

Maurice. Pure Innocent,
The very angels look on thee with sorrow,
To see such virtue suffer such injustice !—
But hearken, while I paint another picture :—
The fiends exulting in thy ready service,
A voluntary minister of evil,
As, with a spirit born of hell and hatred,
Thou pluck'st the flower of hope from happiness,
To plant the thorn instead.

Warren. What crime is this ?

Maurice I heard thy plea for mercy ! I believed thee,
And, as thou wert the child of that dear woman
Who called my mother, sister, I forgave thee,
Most glad to listen to thy deep assurance
Of shame for each sad error. So, I took thee,
Once more, to confidence—my bosom open'd,
And show'd thee, shrined within its holiest chamber,
The image of the being that I lov'd !—
I led thee to her—taught her to behold thee,
My friend and kinsman ; and, misdoubting never,
Still saw thee bend thy footsteps to her dwelling,

Nor dream'd that to the flowers that made my Eden,
Myself had brought the serpent !

Warren. What means this ?

Maurice. What ! Thou know'st nothing ? Thou hast no
conjecture

Of what the serpent sought within the garden !
Why, man, he whispered in Eve's innocent ears,
The oiliest nothings,—mingled with such slander
Of him who sought to make himself her Adam,
That—

Warren. 'Tis false !—I swear ! I never did this mischief !

Maurice. Liar ! The oath thou tak'st is thy perdition !
Behold the evidence that proves thy blackness,
In contrast with its purity and truth !
Clarice ! Come forth ! My wife, sir !

[*Enter Clarice from within.*

Warren. Damnation ! [*Warren rushes out.*

Maurice. Thus fled the fiend, touch'd by Ithuriel's spear,
Even from the reptile rising to the fiend,
And speeding from the Eden that his presence
Shall never trouble more. Henceforth, dear wife,
Our paradise shall still be free from taint ;
A realm of sweetness unobscured by shadow,
And freshening still with flow'rs that take their beauty,
As favour'd still by thine. From this blest moment,
Our peace shall be secure !

Clarice. And yet I fear,
This bold, bad man.

Maurice. Bad, but not bold ! Fear nothing !
I've plucked his sting ! Thou know'st the cruel story ;
I told thee all,—suppressed no syllable—
Of his perversion of a simple paper,
Wherein, in vain display of penmanship,

I gave him power for practice which he seized on,
Exposing me to ruin. In those embers,
The fatal proof lies buried. I am free ;—
And in the freedom I have won from him,
And in the bondage I have sworn to thee,
I write the record of my happiness !
This day I feel triumphant as the hunter,
Who, on the wild steed that his skill hath captured,
Rifle in grasp, and bridle rein flung loose,
Darts forth upon the prairie's waste of empire,
And feels it all his own !

Clarice. I share thy triumph—
Would share that waste with thee and feel no sorrow,
For all that love foregoes.

Maurice. I take thy promise—
Will try thy strength, thy courage and thy heart,
As little thou hast fancied ! Clarice, dear wife,
With dawn we leave this city.

Clarice. How ! to-morrow ?
And leave this city, Norman ?

Maurice. Dost thou fail me ?

Clarice. No ! I am thine ! My world is in thy love ;
I wish no dearer dwelling place—would ask
No sweeter realm of home ! Go, where thou wilt,
I cling to thee as did the Hebrew woman
To him who had his empire in her heart.

Maurice. I bless thee for this proof of thy affection !
This is the city of thy birth and mine,
But that's our native land alone which suffers
That we take root and flourish ;—those alone,
Our kindred, who will gladden in our growth,
And succour till we triumph. Here, it may be,
That, after weary toil, and matchless struggle,

When strength subsides in age, they will acknowledge,
That I am worthy of my bread,—may bid me,
Look up and be an alderman or mayor!—
And this were of their favour. The near neighbours,
Who grew with us, and saw our gradual progress,
Who knew the boy, and all his sports and follies,
Have seldom faith that he will grow the man
To cast them into shadow, We'll go hence!—

Clarice. Whither, dear Norman?

Maurice. Whither! Dost thou ask?
Both in God's keeping, Clarice—thou in mine!
I'll tender thee as the most precious treasure,
That city ever yielded wilderness.

Clarice. I know thou wilt;—but what thy means, my husband?
Thou told'st me thou wast poor.

Maurice. Means! I have manhood!
Youth, strength, and men say, intellect—

Clarice. You have! You have!

Maurice. A heart at ease, secure in its affections,
And still the soul to seek each manly struggle!
Wide is the world before me—a great people,
Spread o'er a realm; along whose verdant meadows
The sun can never set. I know this people—
Love them—would make them mine! I have ambition
To serve them in high places, and do battle
With the arch-tyrannies, in various guises,
That still from freedom pluck its panoply,
Degrade its precious rites, and, with vain shadows,
Mock the fond hopes that fasten on their words.

Clarice. Could you not serve them *here*?

Maurice. No! No!

Clarice. Wherefore not?—
And O! they need some saviour here, methinks!

Maurice. Ay! They do need! But I am one of them,—
Sprung from themselves—have neither friends nor fortune,
And will not stoop, entreating as for favour,
When I would serve to save! They lack all faith
In him who scorns to flatter their delusions,
And lie them to self-worship. In the West,
There is a simpler and a hardier nature,
That proves men's values, not by wealth and title,
But mind and manhood. There, no ancient stocks,
Claim power from precedence. Patrician people,
That boast of virtues in their grandmothers,
Are challenged for their own. With them it answers,
If each man founds his family, and stands
The father of a race of future men!
Mere parchment, and the vain parade of title,
Lifts no man into stature. Such a region
Yields all that I demand—an open field,
And freedom to all comers. So, the virtues
Flourish according to their proper nature;
And each man, as he works with will and courage,
Reaps the good fruitage proper to his claim;—
Thither, dear wife!

Clarice. I'm thine!

Maurice. Thy ready answer,
Completes my triumph! Wings are at my shoulders,
And more than eagle empires woo my flight!
Yet, do I something fear,—Clarice—

Clarice. What fear?

Maurice. Thou art not ambitious.

Clarice. But for thee, Norman;
If that, in service at thy shrine of glory,
Thou dost not lose the love—

Maurice. Be satisfied

That, when my state is proudest, thou shalt be
The one, whom, most of all, these eyes shall look for,
This heart still follow with devoted service.

But, to thy preparations : I will follow ;—

Before the dawn we shall have left this city. [*Clarice going.*]

That reptile, [*musingly.*]

Clarice. [*returning.*] Norman !

Maurice. My Clarice ! [*embracing her.*] [*Exit Clarice.*]

His fangs are drawn !—

Yet, somehow, he is present to my thoughts,
As if he still had power. But, let him dare,
Once more to cross my path, and he shall feel
His serpent head grow flat beneath my heel.

[*Exit within.*]

END OF ACT FIRST.

ACT II.—SCENE I.

Scene: Missouri. A room in the cottage of Norman Maurice.
Enter Maurice and Clarice.

Clarice. Oh! Norman, this is happiness.

Maurice. 'Tis more,—

Security in happiness. Our blossoms
 Fear not the spoiler. On your cheek the roses
 Declare a joyous presence in the heart,
 That makes our cottage bloom.

Clarice. You triumph too,
 In favour as in fortune. On all sides
 I hear your name reëchoed with a plaudit,
 That fills my bosom with exulting raptures
 I never knew before.

Maurice. Ah! this is nothing,
 Dear heart, to the sweet peace that crowns our dwelling,
 And tells us, though the tempest growls afar,
 Its thunders strike not here. The fame I covet
 Is still in tribute subject to your joys;
 And, these secure—you, happy in my bosom—
 My pride forgets its aim! Ambition slumbers
 Nor makes me once forgetful of the rapture,
 That follows your embrace. [*Knock without.*

Clarice. The widow Pressley.

Maurice. Quick, welcome her.—Poor woman, we will save her.

Clarice. I joy to hear you say so.—Come in, madam.

[*Enter Widow Pressly and Kate.*

Maurice. Welcome, dear madam ; you must needs be anxious ;
But still be hopeful. I have brought the action,
And doubt not, from my study of your case,
That we shall gain it—put the usurper out,
And win you back some portion of your wealth.
The truth is on our side,—the evidence
Sustains your claim most amply. We shall gain it !

Widow. Alas ! sir, but the power of this bad man

Maurice. Need not be powerful here.

Widow. You know it not ;—

His wealth, his violence—

Maurice. Will scarce prevail.

Widow. He buys or bullies justice at his pleasure ;
No lawyer here would undertake my case
Lest he should lose a friend or make a foe ;
And thus, for fifteen years—

Maurice. He buys not me,
And scarce will profit by an insolence,
That hopes to bully here.

Widow. Oh ! sir, I tremble,
And cannot help but doubt. I know your talents ;
All people speak of them,—and yet I fear !
With hopes so often lifted and defeated,
How should I dream of better fortune now ?
The widow and the orphan find small favour,
In struggle with the strong and selfish man ;
And this success you promise—

Maurice. None may take
The sovereign accent from the lip of Fate
And say—this thing is written certainly—
But, if I err not, madam, better promise,

Of the clear dawn and the unclouded sunshine,
Ne'er waited on the night. I trust the Jury.
They have no fears to nurse, and seek no favours,
As do that class of men, the mean ambitious,
Who, for the lowly greed of appetite,
Or hungering for a state they never merit,
Cringe with a servile zeal to wealth and numbers,
And nothing show but baseness when they rise.
My faith is in the people.

Widow. Mine in you, sir.

Maurice. I will deserve your confidence. This person,
Who robb'd you of your fortune, would but vainly
Attempt to bully me. I am no bully,
But something have I in my soul which strengthens
Its courage, when the insolent would dare
Usurp the rights that I am set to guard.
Be hopeful, madam. Take no care for the morrow,
Though, with the morrow, our great trial comes!
God and his angels keep the innocent,
And, in his own good season, will redress
Their many wrongs with triumph.

Widow. Sir, I thank you;—
And this poor child, the child of bitterness,
If not of wrath, shall bless you in her prayers,
That nightly seek her mother in the heavens!

Maurice. [*kissing the child.*] Your name is Kate, they tell
me—a sweet name!
You'll, pray for us to-night, Kate. With the morrow.
If my heart's hope do not deceive my heart,
Your prayers shall all be answer'd.—I'll think of her,
And of her sweet and innocent face to-morrow,
When striving with her enemy.

Kate. I'll pray, sir,
As if you were my father.

Widow. She has none, sir.

Maurice. Losing or winning, daughter, still in me,
Look for a father who will cherish you.

Widow. Farewell, good sir, I have not words to thank you.

Maurice. You have a heart that overflows with speech,
And swells into your eyes! No more, dear madam,
Be hopeful and be happy. [*Exeunt widow and child.*]

We must gain it.

The proofs are clear—I cannot doubt the issue,—
And still a prescient something at my heart,
Awakes its triumph with assuring accents
That never spoke in vain. But, who are these?

[*Enter Col. Mercer and Brooks.*]

Welcome, gentlemen.

Mercer. We trust, sir, that you see in us your friends.

Maurice. Such, since our brief acquaintance you have seemed
sir,

And mine's a heart preferring to confide;
That still would rather suffer wrong of faith,
Than not believe in man.

Mercer. You'll find us true;—
And thus it is, that, sure of our good purpose,
We come to counsel with you as a friend.

Maurice. As friends, I welcome you. Be seated, sirs.

Brooks. We do regard you, sir, as one to help us,—
In public matters. From our knowledge of you,
We've said among our friends, this is our man;
And, looking still to you to serve our people,
We hear with grief that you are in a peril
Whose straits, perchance, you know not.

Maurice. Peril, sir?

Brooks. You have brought action for the widow Pressley,
For the recovery of a large possession,
Withheld by Colonel Blasinghame—

Maurice. 'Tis true, sir,

Mercer. You do not know this man.

Maurice. I've heard of him.

Mercer. But not that he is one whom men find prudent
To pass with civil aspect, nor confront
With wrath or opposition. He has power,
Such as few men possess, or dare contend with—
Has wealth in great abundance—is perhaps,
Most fearless and most desperate in battle,
Who better loves the conflict with his fellow
Than any gifts that peaceful life can bring ;
Endow'd with giant strength and resolution,
'And such a shot, from five to fifteen paces,
As still to shatter, wavering in the wind,
The slenderest wand of willow.

Maurice. Famous shooting !

Brooks. It were not wise to wake his enmity !
We look to you to serve our cause in Congress—
Make him your foe, and he opposes you ;
His wealth—his popularity—the terrors,
His very name provokes,—all leagued against you—
You still a stranger.

Maurice. Patiently, I hear ;
And though I feel not like solicitude
With that you show for me, am grateful for it !
And now, sirs, let us understand each other.
I am a man who, in pursuit of duty,
Will hold no parley with that week day prudence
Which teaches still how much a virtue costs.
Of this man, Blasinghame, I've heard already,—

Even as you both describe him. It would seem,
 Lest I should fail in utter ignorance,
 He took a patient trouble on himself,
 To school me in his virtues. Read this letter. [*gives letter.*]

Mercer. }
Brooks. } His hand!—his signature! [*they read.*]

Maurice. Well, gentlemen, you see it written there,
 What are my dangers, if I dare to venture
 This widow's cause against him. Favour me,
 And read the answer which has just been written.

Mercer. [*reads aloud.*] Sir:—The suit of Pressley vs. Blasinghame will be prosecuted to conclusion, without regard to consequences, with the best strength and abilities of

NORMAN MAURICE.

Maurice. It is brief, sir."

Brooks. 'Tis a defiance!

Maurice. 'Twas meant so, gentlemen. I am a man,
 Or I am nothing! This poor widow's cause,
 The very insolence of this Blasinghame,
 Hath made my own! I'll die for it if need be.

Mercer. Art principled 'gainst the duel?

Maurice. Rather ask,
 If, when my enemy takes me by the throat,
 I do oppose him with an homily.
 No man shall drive me from society!—
 I take the laws I find of force, and use them,
 For my protection and defence, as others
 Employ them for assault.

Mercer. You've practised then?

Maurice. Never shot pistol.

Brooks. Nor rifle?

Maurice. Scarcely!

Mercer. You are very rash, sir!

Maurice. Ay! but rashness, sir,
 Becomes a virtue in a case like this;
 And the brave heart, untaught in human practice,
 Finds good assurance from another source
 That prompts its action right. This letter's written,
 And goes within the hour. Let Blasinghame
 Chafe as he may, and thunder to the terror,
 Of those who have no manhood in themselves;—
 He thunders at these portals still in vain!
 To-morrow comes the trial—after that!—
 But let the future wear what look it may,
 I'll find the heart to meet it—as a man!

Mercer. Then you are firm?

Maurice. As are the rocks,
 In conflict with the sea.

Mercer. We joy to find you thus!
 We'll stand by you through danger to the last.

Brooks. Ay, Maurice, we are with you.

Maurice. Friends, your hands!—
 I am not used to friendship, but I love it,
 As still a precious gift, vouchsafed by heaven,
 Next best to love of woman! For this danger,—
 Fear nothing! we shall 'scape it! Nay, 'twill give us,
 Or truth is not of God, new plumes for triumph!

SCENE II.

The law office of Richard Osborne. Osborne discovered writing
Enter Warren.

Warren. We're on the track at last, Look at that letter;
 It comes from our old comrade, Harry Matthews,

And tells us miracles of Norman Maurice!—
 Our worthy cousin has the run of fortune;—
 She seems to crown him with her richest favours,
 As some old bawd, grown hacknied in the market,
 Adopts a virgin passion in her dotage,
 And yields to her late folly, all the profits
 That followed the old vice. He's growing finely;
 But I shall dock his feathers.

Osborne. [*reading.*] In Missouri.

Warren. Ay, in St. Louis, that great western city,
 Our worthy cousin, Norman, has grown famous!
 You read what Matthews writes. In one short twelvemonth
 He springs above all shoulders.

Osborne. I look'd for it!

He's not the man whom fortune can keep under.

Warren. What! you forget our precious document?

Osborne. You will not use it *now*?

Warren. Ah! will I not then?

If ever useful, *now's* the right time for it!
 See you not that he rises like an eagle,
 Already is in practice with the ablest,
 Wins popular favour without working for it,
 And stands i' the way of better politicians?
 They fit his name to music for bad singers,
 To whom none listen save at suffrage time.—
 We'll spoil the song for him.

Osborne. What would you do?—

Warren. You are dull, Dick Osborne! Have I yet to tell
 you,

That, over all, conspicuous in my hate,
 This minion of Fortune stands. His better luck
 Hath robbed me of a prize which most I treasured—
 His better genius trampled mine to dust,—
 Humbled my pride when at its height, and crushed me,

Until I learned to loathe myself, as being
So feeble in his grasp.

Osborne. He crushes you no longer !

Warren. Can I forget the past ? This memory
Becomes a part of the nature o' the man,
And of his future makes a fearful aspect,
Unless he cures its hurts. My path is where
My enemy treads in triumph ! I shall seek it,
And 'twill be hard if hate, well leagued with cunning,
Is baffled of his toil. I seek St. Louis !

Osborne. Beware ! You'll make him desperate !

Warren. I hope so !

Osborne. It brings its perils with it ! Norman Maurice
Will rend his hunter !—

Warren. If he be not wary !

But, fear you nothing. You shall go with me,
And see how deftly, with what happy art,
I shall prepare the meshes for my captive.

Osborne. Me ! go with you ?—and wherefore ?

Warren. A small matter !—

While I shall drive the nail, you'll clinch the rivet.
I'd have you there to prove this document !

Osborne. Spare me this, Warren !

Warren. I can spare you nothing.

Osborne. I do not hate this man ! He hath not wrong'd me,
Cross'd not my path, nor, with a better fortune,
Won from me aught I cherish'd.

Warren. Enough ! Enough !—

Me hath he robb'd and wrong'd—*me* hath he cross'd—
His better fortune still a fate to mine !—
My injury is yours ! You love me, Osborne,—
Will do the thing that I regard as needful,
The more especially as you have secrets,

No less than Norman Maurice. We shall go,
Together, as I fancy, to St. Louis!

Osborne. This is mere tyranny, Warren.

Warren. Very like it!

Guilt ever finds its tyrant in its secret,
And, twinn'd with every crime, the accuser stands,
Its own grim shadow, with the scourge and torture.

Osborne. A dark and damnable truth! Would I had perish'd
Ere I had fallen, and follow'd, as you bade me!

Warren. Spare the vain toil to cheat a troubled conscience,
And to your preparations. By the morrow,
We'll be upon the road.

Osborne. But, for these papers?

Warren. Confound the papers! They will wait for us,
But opportunity never! Get you ready,
And hush all vain excuses. If my sway
Be somewhat tyrannous, still it hath its profits:—
Be you but true, and from the Egyptian spoil,
There shall be still sufficient for your toil. [*Exit Warren.*]

Osborne. I'm chain'd to the stake! He hath me in his pow'r!—
How truly hath he pictured my estate!—
Thus he who doth a deed of ill in youth,
Raises a ghost no seventy years can lay!
I must submit; yet, following still his lead,
Pray Providence for rescue, ere too late:—
'Tis Providence, alone, may baffle Fate! [*Exit Osborne.*]

SCENE III.

The house of Mrs. Jervas in Walnut Street. Enter Mrs. J. and Robert Warren.

Mrs. J. Art sure of what you tell me?

Warren. Never doubt it!—

Matthews, who writes me, is an ancient friend
Who knows this Maurice well. He sees him often,
Though it would seem that Maurice knows not him.
His rising fortunes favour you! 'Twere well
You sought your niece. You are her kinswoman,—
The nearest,—and the loss of all your fortune,
By failure of the Bank—

Mrs. J. But Maurice likes me not!

Warren. Natural enough! You still opposed his passion;
But things are altered now. You've but to show him
'Twas for your niece's good, in your best judgment,
That you denied his suit. But, go to her;—
He's doing well—is popular—grows wealthy;
And now that Fortune looks with smiles on him,
He well may smile on you! You'll live with them,
And we shall meet there.

Mrs. J. We? Meet?

Warren. Did I not love her?

Mrs. J. Ah!—

Warren. And should *he* die?—Should accident, or—

Mrs. J. I see! I see!

Warren. You are my friend, and you will show her—

Mrs. J. Ah! trust me, Robert Warren—

Warren. That's enough!

We understand each other. You will go,—
Her only kinswoman—to seek her out.
You have but her in the world! Say you have err'd;
It was because you loved her that you strove,
'Gainst one, who, whatso'er his worth and talent,
Was not o'erblest'd by Fortune! He may frown,
But cannot well deny you; and, for Clarice—
She will not, sure, repel her mother's sister.

Mrs. J. I'll go! I need the succour of my kindred.

Warren. We'll meet then; but you must not know me there!
'Tis not my policy to vex my rival,
Provoke suspicion, move his jealousy,
Or startle her by any bold renewal,
Of pleadings late denied. Should you discover
That he who, in their presence, stands before you,
Is other than he seems, you will know nothing;
Since that may spoil your game as well as mine.

Mrs. J. You are a deep one!

Warren. When I have your counsel!
This Maurice thought but humbly of your judgment.
He knew you not as I do. He was blinded
By his own proud conceit and arrogance,
And held himself an oracle. 'Twere wise
If still you suffer'd him to fancy thus—
Check'd him in nothing—never counsell'd him—
For still I know he holds your wisdom cheaply,
And scorns the experience which might rise against
His own assured opinion. Such a person
Needs but sufficient cord—

Mrs. J. And he shall have it!

Warren. I'll seek your counsel soon, and you shall teach me
What is our proper action. You will find me
More ready to confide in your experience,

Than him whose cunning seem'd to baffle it.

Farewell then, madam, 'till we meet again. [*Exit Warren.*]

Mrs. J. Farewell, sir! A most excellent young man!

This Maurice shall not carry it at will,—

He scorns me,—does he? He shall feel me still! [*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.

The Hall in the Cottage of Norman Maurice. Time—midnight.

Enter Maurice in night-gown, as just started from his couch.

His hair dishevelled—his manner wild and agitated—his whole appearance that of a man painfully excited and distressed.

Maurice. That I should be unmann'd! That a mere dream,
The blear and frightful aspects of a vision,
Should rouse me to such terror,—shake my soul
From the strong moorings of a steadfast will,
And drive it, a mere wreck, upon the seas,
No hand upon the helm! Ah! my Clarice. [*Enter Clarice.*]

Clarice. My husband—

Maurice. I would thou had'st not seen me thus, Clarice.

Clarice. What means this terror—wherefore did you cry?

Maurice. Surely I did not.

Clarice. Yes, a terrible shriek,
As one who rushes desperate on his foe!

Maurice. No mortal foe has ever from my lips,
Sleeping or waking, forced acknowledgment,
That humbles me like this—

Clarice. What dost thou mean?
What fear?

Maurice. What answer shall I make to thee?—
 How tell thee, my Clarice, 'twas a mere dream,
 That filled me with that agonizing fear,
 Whose shriek thou heard'st. Yet, such a dream, my wife,
 As still pursues me with its fearful forms,
 And shakes me yet with terror. That a man,
 Conscious of strength and will, with conscience free,
 Should, in a mere disorder of his blood,
 In midnight sleep, feel all his soul unsinew'd,
 And sink into the coward!

Clarice. Thou art none!

Maurice. Yet such a vision—and methinks I see!—
 Hist,—is there nothing crawling by the hearth,
 Crouching and winding, and with serpent folds,
 Preparing its dread venom?

Clarice. There is nothing, husband—
 The hearth holds only the small jar of flowers.

Maurice. The reptile ever seeks such crouching place,
 And garbs his spotty hide with heedless blossoms,
 That know not what they harbour. Fling it hence!
 'Twas on the hearth it crouch'd. But, hear me, wife;
 That dream! 'Twas of a serpent on our hearth,
 Thou heedless, with thy hand upon the flowers,
 Disposing them for show. Unseen and soft—
 It wound about thee its insidious coil,
 And, at the moment when I first beheld,
 Its brazen head was lifted, its sharp fang
 Was darting at thy heart! 'Twas then I shriek'd
 And rush'd upon the monster thus, and smote!—

[*Dashing the vase to pieces.*

Heedless of every sting, I trampled it;
 But, even as it writhed beneath my heel,
 Methought, it lifted up a human face
 That looked like Robert Warren!

Clarice. What a dream!

Maurice. I cannot shake it off. Did'st hear a sound,
Most like a hiss?

Clarice. Nay, nay! 'twas but a dream!
Come—come to bed.

Maurice. Why should I dream of him?

Clarice. You think of him, perchance.

Maurice. And, as a reptile!
The terrible image still before me crawls—
Oh! that I might, with but a bound and struggle,
Though still at life's worst peril, trample him!

Clarice. Yet wherefore?

Maurice. There are instincts of the soul.
That have a deep and true significance,
And, though no more in danger from his malice,
I feel within me that he works unsleeping,
In venomous toils against me.

Clarice. But, in vain.
Come, Norman, come to bed. You frighten me.

Maurice. Forgive me! There! I have thee at my lips,
I strain thee to my bosom with a joy
That leaves no rapture wanting—yet, methinks,
I hear a sound of hissing, and still see
Glimpses of folding-serpents that, behind,
Crawl after us—

Clarice. My Norman!

Maurice. I grieve thee!
I will forget this vision in the blessing
This grasp makes real to rapture. Let us in.

[*He folds his arm about her, and they leave the apartment, he still looking behind him suspiciously—she looking up to him.*]

SCENE V.

The edge of a wood. A cottage in the distance. Enter Robert Warren, Osborne, and Harry Matthews. The former disguised with false hair, whiskers, &c.

Matthews. [*pointing to cottage.*] Look!—you may see it now!

Warren. There, then, he harbours?

A goodly cottage—he's a man of taste,
Not yet too old for sentiment, it seems;
Loves flowers and shade trees, and around his porches
I fancy that we see some gadding tendrils,
That wanton, with full censers, in his homage!
He should be happy there!

Matthews. Why, so he is.

Warren. You think so?

Matthews. There's everything to make him so. He's young—
Is on the road to fortune and to fame,
And has a handsome wife.

Warren. The landscape's fair,—
Looks bright beneath the sunshine and exhales
A thousand delicate odours rich in life;
But, sometimes, there's a tempest in the night,
And where's your landscape then?

Matthews. Be this his case,
It shall not cost me one poor hour of sleep,
For all the coil it makes. This man's our foe,—
Goes with our enemies in politics,
And will, though now he knows it not himself,
Be run, against our crack man, for the Senate.

Warren. Who's he?

Matthews. Ben Ferguson.

Warren. Plain Ben?

Matthews. Colonel Ben!

'Tis only when the man's a favourite,
We take the formal handle from his name
And sing it short for sweetness.

Warren. Is he able?

Matthews. We thought him so 'till this your Maurice came;—
Since then our favourite loses in the race.
Ben is a lawyer in first practice here
And had the field to himself since I have known him,
'Till now—

Osborne. Maurice and he have grappled then?

Matthews. To Ferguson's defeat.

Osborne. Before the Jury?

Matthews. Ay, every way—before the judge and jury,—
In court and out of court. At public meetings
They were in opposite ranks, and, with each issue,
Maurice hath risen still in popular favour,
While Ferguson declines. It will rejoice us,
If, as you say, you have some history
To floor this powerful foe!

Warren. You need not doubt it.
But who are friends to Maurice, here,—the people?

Matthews. Were it the people only, it were nothing.
They have not yet arisen to Self Esteem,
And, kept full fed on vanity, are heedless,
Hugging their shadows, how they lose the substance.
Here, all their sympathies are held by others;
Men of much wealth and some ability,
Who, gladly, in this Maurice find an ally,
And join with him to use him. There's a party
Who long have lacked a leader. Norman Maurice

Brings them the head they seek. He guides their councils,
And, with such prudent skill and policy,
That still they fancy he is but their mouth-piece,
Even while he gives the breath of life to them.
I know that they will run him for the Senate.

Warren. Can they elect him?

Matthews. It is somewhat doubtful.
They never yet succeeded with their man,
Not having had the man to make success.
What they can do *for him* is not the question,
So much as what he may achieve *for them*.
I tell you, though not fearful for the issue,
It makes us something anxious. Now,—this secret—
If it be true, indeed, that,—

Warren. Be you ready;—
I'll see your friends to-morrow. We'll sleep on it.
To-night, I'll fathom Maurice if I can,
And see how he enjoys his western life.
Enough! I have him in my power! To-morrow!—

Matthews. But what's the secret?

Warren. It will keep till then.
Be sure, that when your game is to be play'd—
When Norman Maurice, at the height of favour,
Waits but the will to rise up Senator—
A single word shall damn him down to ruin,
And stifle every voice that shouts his name.

Osborne. Yet, once more, Warren, ere it be too late,
Let me entreat and counsel—

Warren. You are doting!
Go you with Matthews, and, should I be missing,
You both can tell whither my steps were bent,
And what my power upon him.

Osborne. [*aside to W.*]

Why incur

This danger,—for you too must see the danger,—
To feed this foolish malice.

Warren. [*aside to O.*] Is it foolish?—
Not when the profit's yours, the pleasure mine ;—
And I, if fortune mocks me not with fancies,
Shall find a pleasure in the game I play at,
That you may never dream of ! Be you easy—
There's little danger ! I've securities
'Gainst *him* in *you*, and in his secret fears,
Not less than in the policy I use ;
Besides, my habit, does it not disguise me ?

Osborne. He has the eye of an eagle !

Warren. Pshaw !

Osborne. Beware !—

His genius—you yourself confess it, Warren—
Hath always, when the final issue came,
Soar'd over you triumphant !

Warren. Oh ! Good night.

We'll meet again to-morrow ! [*Exit Warren.*]

Osborne. He'll pay for it !

He runs on ruin !

Matthews. Not his own, methinks !

Osborne. His own, though now it seems not. I've an instinct
That tells me Maurice cannot be o'erthrown.
Baffled he may be ;—you may torture him—
Deny him his just place and high position,
One or more seasons ; but he'll rise at last,
So firmly, that the very hands that struggle
To tear him from his throne, will help to build it.
There are some men to whom the fates decree
Performance,—and this man is one of them !
What was his prospect when I knew him first ?
He had no friends,—he had no fellowships,

No heedful care of parents—no tuition ;—
He stood alone i' the world—unknown, unhonour'd—
Nay, something hated, as I hap to know,
For that he had some innate qualities,
Of pride, of strength, of soul and character,
That would not let him stoop ! In spite of all,
He hath struggled through the strife and the obstruction ;
Won friends ; won homage ; high position won ;
And still hath grown, the more erect and noble,
At each assault upon his pride and fortune !
I *feel* that he *must* triumph !

Matthews. You speak well,
The promise of our enemy ! You differ,
Somewhat, from Robert Warren ; yet, you know
This secret.

Osborne. Ay—as Warren's ; and I know,
The rise of Maurice is his overthrow !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.

The interior of the cottage of Norman Maurice. A table spread as if supper were just concluded. Maurice and Clarice discovered seated. Maurice balances a spoon upon the cup. Clarice watches him.

Clarice. You muse my husband.

Maurice. [*pushing away the cup.*] 'Tis with happiness !
Know you, Clarice, that fifteen months have pass'd
Since we were married.

Clarice.

Is it possible !

I had not thought it !

Maurice. Time is wing'd with pleasure,
When that the heart, reposing where it loves,
Finds strength for fresher love in faith secure !
The world would seem to smile on me at last !
'Till we were wedded, such had been my fortune,
I questioned still the sunshine when it came ;
And, in its sudden and capricious beauty,
Still dreaded something sinister and hostile.
But now I feel secure ! With you beside me,
A fair, free world before me, and employment,
Grateful at once to intellect and feeling,
Affording Thought due exercise for triumph,
Methinks, I have from Fate a guaranty,
That she foregoes at last her ancient grudges ;
And, it may be, despising our ambition,
Thus easily satisfied with love and quiet,
Turns her sharp arrows on some nobler victim,
Whose young audacity offends her pride !
Sure, Clarice, this is happiness.

Clarice.

It is more !

Such happiness as well might task the fancy,
To wing with words of sweetest poesy.

Maurice. Then sing for me. I'm in the mood for music ;
My heart is glad ; my thoughts would wander freely ;
Commercing with the indistinct, but sweet.

Clarice. Nay, Norman, nay : I'm selfish in my gladness ;
You sing not ; but a something more than music
Swells in the verse that gathers on your lips ;—
And this reminds me of the little ballad
You promised me,—once half recited me,

And fain would have me think your heart conceived it
When first it grew to mine!

Maurice. And I said truly!
Thoughts passing fair had floated through my fancy—
Thoughts born of warmest tastes and pure affections,
Which yet had found no name! I had strange visions
Of grace and feminine beauty, such as never
The world had shown me living. Then I met thee,
And, on the instant, did they take thy image;—
And thus I first knew how, and whom, to love!
These fancies did I body forth in verses,
As one records a vision of the midnight,
That fills his soul with marvels; and the hour,
That brought me first acquainted with thy beauties,
Taught me what name to write above my record,
Which, until then, had none.

Clarice. Norman—*was* it mine?

Maurice. Thine, only, my beloved one!

Clarice. Now, the verses,
In thy best manner, Norman.

Maurice. What! repeat them?—
Would'st ruin me, Clarice, in public favour;
Sap my distinction, lose me my profession,
Draw down the vulgar laughter on my head,
And make grave senators and learned statesmen
Shake reverend brows in sorrow at my folly?

Clarice. Nay, you mock me now?

Maurice. Would'st have a lawyer,—
Subtle, and stern, and disputations, still,—
Full of retorts and strange philosophies;
Whose dreams by night are of the close encounter
With rival wits and wary adversaries,—
Whose thoughts by day are still upon indictments,

Flaws, fees, exceptions, old authorities,
 And worldly arguments, and stubborn juries,—
 And all the thousand small details that gather,
 Like strings about the giant Gulliver,
 Dragging and fettering down to lowly earth
 The upsoaring mind that else might scale the heavens!—
 Wouldst have him, in the vagrancy of fancy,
 Possess his soul with spells of poesy;
 Having no fear that, lurking at his threshold,
 His neighbour Jones or Jenkins, Smith or Thompson,
 Some round and fat, but most suspicious client,
 Bringing great fees,—his heart upon his action,—
 Seeking the sourest aspect in his lawyer,—
 Stands, rooted, with strange horror, as he listens
 To most ridiculous rhymes, and talk of flow'rs,
 Moonbeams, and zephyrs—all that staple sweetness,
 That makes the fancies of young thoughtless bosoms;—
 When most he hoped to hear of *Chose in action*,
Trespass, assumpsit, action on the case,
 And other phrases, silly as the rhymester's,—
 But that they sound in money, not in music!
 No! No!—no poësy! 'Twere loss of client!

Clarice. Nay, Norman, but you jest now! Speak the verses,
 If need be, in low accents.

Maurice. Lest Jones or Jenkins,
 Should turn about, possess'd with holy horror,
 And seek some other lawyer! You shall have them!
 They are yours, Clarice, for, truly, they embody
 What still meseem'd the virtues of your nature;—
 Tastes, sweet and delicate as evening glories
 That tend upon the passage of the day,
 And, twinn'd with gleam and shadows, through the twilight,
 Betoken, as it were, the unknown beauties,
 That make a happier future in the far.

Clarice. You describe the verses?

Maurice. It needs I should!

They take a mystic tone and character,
And ask the key-note. You will hardly like them:
Thoughtful, not lyrical, nor passionate,
They need that you should pause upon each accent,
Or they will lose their due significance!
But, next to the grave folly of such doing,
Is the grave preface that still pleads for it.
You lead me erring, *Clarice*, to these trifles—
You, and the exulting feeling at my heart,
That deems this happiness sure!—Ha! That knock!

[*Knock at the door—he starts.*]

Methinks it hath a meaning! A sharp instinct

Tells me that evil at our threshold lurks. [*Whispers.*]

Clarice. Evil, my husband! Let me open it!

[*Goes toward the door.*]

Maurice. [*interposing.*] You, *Clarice*! You mistake me.—

There's an instinct,

That, though it speaks of evil, hath no fear!—

Who's there? [*Aloud.*]

Voice without. A friend!

Maurice. [*throwing open the door.*] Enter, friend!

[*Enter Robert Warren as before, with valise in his hand.*]

Warren. Pardon me this intrusion, but I'm wearied,—
I've travell'd far,—the last seven miles afoot,
Having lost my horse by the way.

Maurice. You're welcome, sir,
To our poor fare, the shelter of our dwelling
'Till you recover. *Clarice*, see to it.

[*Maurice points her to the supper table. She turns and leaves the room,—Warren follows her with his eye, while that of Maurice observes him.*]

Warren. I thank you, sir.

Maurice. Meanwhile, sit down and rest.
Give me your burden. 'Twill require some minutes
To get your supper, make your chamber ready ;
'Till then, forget your travel.

Warren. You are kind !
How far, sir, are we from St. Louis, here ?

Maurice. Four miles only.

Warren. You, perhaps, can tell me
Something of persons living in St. Louis :
I'm a collector from an Eastern city.
And have a claim upon one Harry Matthews.

Maurice. [*His brow slightly contracts.*] *Harry Matthews !*

Warren. Or *Henry* Matthews : is he good, sir ?

Maurice, [*coldly.*] It may be, sir ; I know not !

Warren. You know the man ?

Maurice. I have seen him often, sir, but know him not.

Warren. The house I represent has had suspicions ;—
A Philadelphia house.

Maurice. Of Philadelphia !

Warren. A famous city, sir ; but you have seen it ?

Maurice. I know it well, sir. [*Catches the eye of Warren,*
which suddenly drops at the encounter.

Warren. Ah ! you've travelled thither ?

Maurice. Have *lived* there, sir ; and, now, I think of it,
It may be that you can answer *me* of persons,
Whom once I knew there ;—there was Mrs. Jervas—

Warren. A widow, sir, who lived in Walnut street ?

Maurice. The same !—

Warren. I've heard of her. She lost her fortune lately
By failure of the Bank.

Maurice. Indeed !

Warren. And has left the city,
'Twas said, to seek her kindred in the West.

Maurice. [*To Clarice, who reënters.*] Hear you that, Clarice?

Clarice. Is it possible?

It cannot be she means—

Maurice. Perhaps. 'Tis like.

Warren. She has a niece and nephew in the West—

'Twas so reported—who have sent for her,
They being very wealthy, she in want.

Maurice. [*with a smile.*] Indeed!

Clarice. She has no nephew living, sir.

Warren. [*smiles.*] Ah! you know her, then?

Maurice. She is this lady's aunt, sir;

And, it may be, this excellent Mrs. Jervas
Comes hither to her niece, who is my wife, sir.

I suppose, that, as the husband of the one,

I may be held a nephew to the other;

And loving, too, makes kindred. Well, Clarice,

You'll make the good lady welcome if she comes,

Which, *now*, I scarcely question.

Tell me, sir,

Of other persons in that goodly city;—

There was a mute, I knew, one Nicholas Foster,

Whom much I fancied—

Warren. A rare machinist,

Though few conceived his talent.

Maurice. [*aside.*] Yet, *you* knew it!

Warren. He's well as ever.

Maurice. Sully, the master-painter,

A pure, good man, whose exquisite art endows

The beauty with a charm beyond her own,

Caught from his delicate fancy.

Warren. He's still famous.

Maurice. I would you could say fortunate as famous,
As still his art deserves.—I know not why,

But these enquiries sadden me, and yet—
There was one Richard Osborne—

Warren. An attorney—

Maurice. A most obscure one, though of certain merits,
Who might have been distinguish'd, having pow'rs
To raise him into something high and worthy,
But for his evil genius—

Warren. [*quickly.*] Ha! sir! He?—

Maurice. Were you a student—an anatomist
Of character—instead of a collector;—
But—

Warren. Yet would I hear, sir.

Maurice. He, sir, I mean,
Were one whom it were well to analyze,
Did one design a new philosophy,
And sought in strange anomalies to embrace
The opposite things in nature. Fancy a creature,
Having the external attributes of man,—
The capacious brow—the clear, transparent eye—
The form erect—the voice most musical—
Quick talent, ready art and specious language,
And something winning in his natural manner,
Beguiling still the unwary to belief—
Yet, as if made in mock of heaven's own purpose,
Having, in place of heart, a nest of vipers;
Whose secret venom, mastering all his powers,
Taints ever his performance—makes his doings,
When most they favour virtue, tend to vice—
Corrupts the word he utters, makes him false,
When most the truth should be his policy,—
And keeps him ever lothely in pursuit
Of purposes most loathesome. Know you, sir,
One Robert Warren? [*Laying his hand on Warren's shoulder,*
and eyeing him closely.

Warren. [*shrinking and stammering.*] Me, sir—Warren?
No!

Maurice. [*flinging him away and rising.*] Liar and reptile, as
thou still hast been,

'Twere thousand times more hopeful to endow
The serpent with the nature of the dove,
To graft the fruit of Eden on the tree,
That, with its bitter, blights the Dead Sea shore—
Appease the tiger's thirst—the leopard's spots
Pluck from his side, and bind him with a straw—
Than change the designing devil at thy heart!

Warren. What mean you, sir?

Clarice. [*seizing his arm.*] Oh! Norman, wherefore this?

Maurice. What! See you not? Hath sense of happiness
So totally obscured the sense of wrong,
That memory lacks each faculty, and nature,
Losing the subtle instinct which still counsels
The innocent of its peril, stoops to wanton
With the fang'd viper in his villainous coil.
The dream! the dream! my Clarice. Get thee hence!
Leave me to deal with him. Away!

Clarice. What's he?

Maurice. What! do his looks not answer as the reptile's,
That speak his subtle snare and silent venom!
Doth not his coward crouching show his nature,
As now I stretch the arm of vengeance o'er him?
Must I confer a name upon the victim,
Even in the moment when I strike the blow,
Lest, in their ignorant blindness, men should fancy
This were a kinsman whom in wrath I slew!

Warren. Beware!—this violence! [*Snatches a knife from
the table.*]

Maurice. Is justice only—

Clarice. [*interposing.*] Norman! Husband!

Maurice. What ! See'st not still !

Clarice. I see ! I know !—and yet—

Maurice. And yet, and yet, and yet ! is the child's wisdom !
Shall we not be secure—never find refuge !
Shall hate pursue, and vengeance turn not on him !
Must we be driven from each world of peace,
To burrow with the hill fox and the wolf,
When but a stroke is needful—

Clarice. Oh ! thou must not :
He shares our hospitality—our shelter !

Maurice. [*hurling the table over.*] He hath not touch'd the
bread and sacred salt,
He shall not claim the Arab privilege,—
He dies !—

Clarice. For my sake, Norman, spare him !
Let him go hence ; the past is over now.

Warren. She counsels wisely, Norman. Lift no hand
Against me, for I come to you in peace.

Maurice. In peace ! In peace ! And wherefore this disguise ?
Thy fraudulent tale of travel—this false semblance,
False hair, false speech—unless with heart and purpose
False as of old ! Dids't think, that I, who knew thee,
By such damn'd treachery as thou still hast shown me,
Could be deceived by wretched arts like these ?—
My blindness and my confidence so perfect,
That I should sleep and dream, while at my pillow
Thou crep'st at midnight, from the hearth that warm'd thee,
To fasten on my heart ! Thou com'st, an outlaw !—
What hinders that I slay thee ?—that I take thee,
Thus, by the throat, and, stifling fear and feeling,
Slaughter thee, as a bullock at the altar,
Thy blood would still profane !

Clarice. [*interposing.*] Norman ! Norman !

Oh! must thy Clarice plead to thee in vain?
Spare him, if but in gratitude to heaven,
For that we prosper in his hate's despite.

Maurice. 'Tis for that very reason I should slay him!
He comes to blight our brief prosperity,
To compass all our sunshine with his cloud,
And taint our flow'rs with poison.

Warren. Yet, beware!
She counsels thee with wisdom, Norman Maurice;
I am not friendless here. Did aught befall me,
Here, in thy dwelling, to my mortal hurt,
'Tis known that I came hither—'tis known farther,
That I have that to speak against thy fame,
Shall blacken it forever.

Maurice. Ha, say'st thou that!
Well thou would'st something more!

Warren. Only a word—
And lest thy prudence should not check thy passion,
My providence—[*showing pistol.*]

Maurice. What! thou hast weapons then!
Now, by my hopes—if it were possible,
To find thee but one moment flush with manhood!—
Look on me, villain, as I now confront thee,
But, lift thine eye to mine, and let thy aim
Be deadly as thy malice! Wretched coward—
Thus do I mock thy impotence. [*Rushes upon him and wrests
the weapon from his hand.*]

Warren. Spare me, Norman!

Clarice. Husband, let him live!

Maurice. Outlaw! that masks him with deliberate purpose—
[*Takes Warren by the throat.*]

Warren. Mercy, Norman!

Maurice. That seeks by night my dwelling with a lie!—

Clarice. Husband—dear husband !

Maurice. That lifts his deadly weapon 'gainst my bosom—

Warren. Thou stranglest me !

Clarice. Have pity, Norman !

Maurice. For thy sake, I spare him !—

Warren. Thanks—oh, thanks !

Maurice. Yet feel how better 'twere to crush him now,
Than suffer him—

Warren. I swear !

Maurice. Oh !—if thou durst
Take name of God in vain to do hell service,—
I'll slay thee with a certainty of vengeance
That leaves no limb unhurt. For well I know
Thy heart is never then less free from malice,
Than when thy lips declare thy innocence.
Hence, ere I change my purpose. I will spare thee,
And fling thee from my threshold, but to show thee
How much I still forbear. [*Hurls him out headlong.*]

Clarice. Oh, how I thank thee.

Maurice. If evil follows on this mercy, *Clarice*,
Thine is the fault.

Clarice. Oh, Norman, this man's hate—

Maurice. While we can tear the falsehood from his brow,
Is nothing, but—

Clarice. Why should he follow us ?

Maurice. Oh ! for some hellish purpose. But go in ;
Leave me awhile.

Clarice. Wilt thou not close the door ?

Maurice. Let it stay wide all night.

Clarice. You go not forth ?

Maurice. One sleeps not when the wolf is in his close,
Lest that his howl should stir his infant's sleep—
And when I doubt if ill is at my threshold,

'Twere base to sleep upon the pillow of doubt.
But, go you in, dear wife!—you must not hear,
The voice in anger you have heard in love.
Leave me awhile. This thing still troubles me,
But should not trouble you. Go to your prayers,
And leave the watches of the night to me.
God still presides o'er all. I see not yet,
The evil that this evil spirit brings,
But trust that we shall lack no help of angel,
Whene'er the struggle comes.

Clarice. Norman.

Maurice. Dear wife!

Clarice. Forget not that my life is in thy hands.

Oh, do not rashly purpose.

Maurice. Never fear! [*Embrace. Ex. Clarice within.*]

Maurice. What can he mean! That paper is destroyed; —
Why should I fear his malice? Yet, so truly,
I know his equal baseness and design,
I feel that he hath purposes of mischief,
Which, if he lack'd the agencies of evil,
He ne'er had underta'en. No sleep for me,
When that the dark suspicions in my soul,
Engender still the foe. I must go forth!— [*looks out.*]
Oh! God, how beautiful the calm o'er earth,—
How soft the night, that, with a veil of brightness
Wraps all the subject creatures—peace and sleep,
Sharing the dreamy blessing, as if Evil,
Sped not malignant spirits through the air,
And never flower of earth had felt a reptile!

[*Goes forth.*]

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.—SCENE I.

*A chamber in the dwelling of Harry Matthews, in St. Louis.
Robert Warren and Richard Osborne discovered.*

Osborne. I warn'd you of the peril.

Warren. Yet your wisdom
Had scarcely fancied that his glance could fathom
Disguise so good as mine!

Osborne. I said his eye
Was like an eagle's. It were hard to say,
What, with his mind once roused into suspicion,
It could not penetrate.

Warren. 'Twould better please me,
If one, who should be in my service only,
Could find my foe less perfect.

Osborne. And, to do so,
Should prove himself less true.

Warren. Oh! your truth,
Were better shown in service than opinion!
My habit was good; and I had been secure,
But that, to sound him, I unseal'd myself;
And, like a witling, answered all his questions,
Of persons whom we once had known together.

Osborne. Be sure, he first suspected ere he question'd.

Warren. 'Tis like enough! At all events he floor'd me;—
Disgraced me as he still hath done before

In frequent strife. The mask is thrown aside ;
He knows me, here, his enemy ; and now—
The open conflict !

Osborne. What is now the game ?
The open conflict he would never shrink from !
Why, when his hand was fix'd upon your throat,
Did you forbear the weapon ?

Warren. Ask me rather,
Why one is still superior to his fellow ;
Why one is brave, another impotent ;
Why I am feeble just where he is strong ;—
And why, with will to compass his destruction,
My heart still fails me in the final effort !
Such still hath been the sequel of our issues !
He still hath mastered me with such a will,
My spirit droops before him, and I shudder,
To feel, that, with a hate so fixed and fearful,
I lack the heart to drive the weapon home !—
But I shall do it yet !

Osborne. And why the conflict,
Thus ever urged with fate so full of peril ?
Now, while you may forbear, and pause in safety,
Forego the struggle, which hath still been hopeless ;
Give him repose, and leave yourself at peace.

Warren. Peace ! with these passions !

Osborne. They will wreck your own !
A something tells me such must be the issue,
In any strife with Maurice.

Warren. Vain the counsel—
I cannot leave the conflict !

Osborne. Why ?

Warren. Will not do so !
While still my hate must go unsatisfied—
My pride,—to say no more of other passions.

Osborne. This woman—

Warren. Not a word of her!

Osborne. Smiles she,

That still you prosecute this doubtful struggle?

Warren. She may, perchance, when she is duly tutor'd,
That, on my whisper, hangs her husband's honour.

Osborne. This is your purpose, then?

Warren. You do not like it?

Osborne. I am your slave,—the creature of your mood,
More at your mercy far than Norman Maurice,
Since he is innocent and I am guilty;—
What matter what I like?

Warren. Why, that's well said!—
Enough for you I must pursue my victims,
While hate conceives a hell for him, or passion
Dreams still of heaven from her! This day, when Maurice
Leaves for the city, I shall seek his dwelling.

Osborne. Again! untaught by late experience!
You seek his wife then?

Warren. Why, not exactly.—
Perhaps you do not know that Mrs. Jervas
Arrived last night at midnight.

Osborne. How can she
Assist you in this mad pursuit? You tell me
That Maurice still suspects her.

Warren. Never matter—
She is my ally;—but, here's Harry Matthews:
He comes to take me to the secret council,
Where other plans mature against our foeman.

Osborne. You will not breathe this secret to these people?

Warren. I will *but* breathe it.

Osborne. And withhold the proof?

Warren. As suits my purpose. It is very likely,

I shall not call on you till the last hour,
When all is ready for his overthrow !
Of this be sure, Dick Osborne : I will pamper
My several passions as I can, and stint them,
In nothing, that may gratify their rage.

[Enter Harry Matthews.

Matthews. Art ready, Warren ?

Warren. Will be in a moment !

Matthews. [to Osborne.] You'll go with us.

Osborne. Excuse me.

Warren. [aside to Osborne.] Why not go ?

Osborne. [aside to W.] Sufficient, as they tell us, for the day
Its evil ; when I can no longer 'scape it,
I'll mix in this conspiracy ;—till then,
Let me go idle.

Warren. [aside to Osborne.] Hark you, Richard Osborne,
No faltering when the moment comes to speak ;
The rod that does not yield to me, I break !

[Ex. Matthews and Warren.

Osborne. And no escape ! I dare not run on ruin,
And face the shame with which he threatens me ;
Yet, with a tyranny so terrible,
That plies me with its torture night and day,
'Twere better throw increase of weight on conscience,
And, by embrace with deeds of deadlier aspect,
At least secure escape from sway like this !
Had I the heart for it ! Could I find the courage !
'Twere but a blow !—a blow ! I'll ponder it. [Ex. Osborne.

SCENE II.

An apartment in the house of Col. Ferguson. Ferguson, Blasinghame, Matthews, Warren, and other persons discovered.

Blasinghame. The matter then resolves itself to this—
We know for certain, now, that this man, Maurice,
Will be the opposition candidate :—
Ben Ferguson is ours.

Ferguson. And why not you ?

Blasinghame. For the best reasons. No ! my private business
Needs careful nursing now. This woman, Pressley,
Is like to give me trouble.

Matthews. Her new lawyer
Is stubborn, then ?

Blasinghame. He seems to be a man ;
And we shall suffer him to prove his manhood !
I wrote him of the merits of my case,
Concluding, with a civil exhortation,
As he was young, and but a stranger here,
That he should spare his teeth, nor peril them,
On nuts too hard to crack.

Matthews. What said he then ?

Blasinghame. Oh ! with an answer bold enough, I warrant.

Matthews. He did not know his customer, I fancy.

Blasinghame. I think not ; and to lesson him a little,
One of my lambs was sent to him this morning—
Joe Savage !

Ferguson. Joe's a rough teacher, Colonel.

Blasinghame. As God has made him, Joe. He'll do our business
As tenderly as if it were his own.

Ferguson. But was there not some whisper of a secret
Touching this Norman Maurice, which, if true,
Would render any messages of honour,
Impossible, to him !

Blasinghame. I did not hear ;—
Unfold your budget.

Ferguson. Harry Matthews, there,
Speaks of a secret in his friend's possession,
That's fatal to this man !

Blasinghame. Ha ! out with it !
'Twill save a monstrous trouble in our wigwam ;
For, to say truth, this man is popular,
Grows every day in strength in the assembly,
And, I confess to you, I have my fears,
Touching the play before us. Our new members
Are not what I would have them ; and old Mercer,
Catesby and Brooks, gain daily influence,
Under the cunning counsel of this Maurice.
If we can crush this fellow, who has talent,
And shows more stubbornness than I can relish,
'Twere better done before we lose our headway.
This man disposed of, they can find no other
To take the field with Ferguson.

Matthews. Speak, Warren !

Warren. There *is* a secret, gentlemen ; a dark one
Which, told, *were* fatal to this Norman Maurice !
I will *not* tell it *now* ; but wait the moment,
When, over all, conspicuous most, he stands,
With triumph in his prospect, and his spirit,
Exulting in the state he deems secure !
Then will I come between his hope and triumph ;
Then show the guilty secret that degrades him,
Confound him with the proofs which now are ready,

And hurl him down to ruin, the more fatal,
For that I suffer'd him to rise so high.

Blasinghame. But why not now? The man is high enough!

Warren. The secret's mine, sir. When I'm done with it,
I'll bury it as did the Phrygian barber,
Where every reed that whistles in the wind
Shall make it into music for his ear.

Be sure of this, I'll yield it you in season,
Ere Maurice sits a Senator in Congress!

Matthews. Well—that's sufficient!

Blasinghame. Yes! Let him do that!
Meanwhile, there is a way to save himself.

This Maurice has my message—

Matthews. He'll not fight!

Blasinghame. If he would—

Matthews. His honour would be rescued by his death?

Warren. Scarcely; since 'tis for me to keep the secret,
Or free it, if I please! But, let me tell you,
That Maurice will not shrink from any combat!
I know him well. He is mine enemy,
But let me do him justice. He will fight,
Though all the devils of hell stood up against him.
Look to it, sir; [*to Blasing.*,] your reputation's great,
But Maurice is no common opponent;
And you will need your utmost excellence,
To conquer him when once he takes the field!

Blasinghame. Well, that's good news! My lamb is with
him now;

We'll hear from him by noon.

Ferguson. Before we part,

'Tis understood we put our troops in motion;
The strife will be a close one! *Blasinghame*
Hath truly spoken of this new assembly;

It puzzles me to fathom it. This Maurice,
Is, questionless, a man of wondrous power ;
And, though I much prefer that we should beat him,
In a fair wrestle, with the usual agents,
Yet this is not so certainly our prospect,
As that we should forego this fatal secret,
That makes our game secure.

Warren. You shall have it.

Blasinghame. We meet to-night at Baylor's.

Matthews. [to Warren.] You'll be with us ?

It may be that your fruit will then be ripe.

Blasinghame. Ay, come, sir, with your friend.

Warren. [to Matthews.] Perhaps ! We'll see ;—
There may be other fruits upon that tree.

[*Exeunt several ways.*]

SCENE III.

An apartment in the house of Norman Maurice. He appears seated at a table with books and papers before him. After a pause, he closes his books, folds and ties the papers in a bundle, pushes them from before him and rises.

Maurice. [solus.] It is the curse of insecurity !
That cruel doubt that hangs upon possession ;
Glides with the midnight to the sleepless pillow,
And, with the laurel wreath that crowns the triumph,
Sows thick the thorns that make the brow to ache !
Did the endowment not imply the service,

Were we not each enjoin'd with a commission,
The task decreed, the struggle thrust upon us,
Making it manhood to comply with duty ;
How better far—the treasure in our keeping,
Love at our bosom, peace upon our threshold,
When bliss can never hope increase of rapture,
And fear begins to dream of unknown danger,—
To fly the world—the conflict,—nay, the triumph,
And, bearing off the trophy we have won,
Hush the ambitious spirit in our hearts
That whispers, “Life hath more !” Have I won nothing,
That I should toil, as unrequited Labour
Still hoping yet to win ? Am I a beggar,
Who, perilling nothing in each fearful venture,
Stakes all his hopes on change ? With goods so precious,
Should I still venture in the common market,
Where Malice stands, with gibe of cruel slander,
And Envy lurks in readiness to steal ?—
When the still shelter of the wilderness,
The depth of shadow, the great solitudes,
Beckon the heart with promise of their own,
Still singing, “here is refuge !”

Wretched folly !—

As if the serpent could not find the garden ;
As if the malicious Hate, by hell engendered,
Had not an equal instinct, how to fathom
The secret haunt where rapture hopes to hide !
Hate bears a will as resolute as love,
A wing as swift, an eye as vigilant,
And instincts, that, as still they keep it sleepless,
Prompt the keen search when Rapture stops for rest !
A sad presentiment of coming evil
Stifles each generous impulse at my heart,

That ever spoke in confidence. This Warren,
Is here for mischief; with what hope to prosper—
That single proof destroy'd—I now divine not.
This woman, coming close upon his footsteps,
Confirms my apprehensions. They are allies—
She false as he, but feeble—his mere creature,
To beat the bush, while he secures the game!
Well! I must watch them with a vigilance,
Due to the precious treasure in my trust;
And, swift as justice in avenging mission,
With the first show of evil in their purpose,
Crush them to earth, and——Well?

[*Enter servant.*

Servant. Major Savage, sir.

Maurice. Show him in.

[*Enter Savage.*

Savage. Your name is Maurice?

Maurice. 'Tis sir. Yours?

Savage. Mine is Joe Savage,—Major of militia.

You got a letter, sir, a week ago,
From Colonel Blasinghame.

Maurice. And answer'd it!

Savage. That answer did not please him, Blasinghame.

Maurice. I'm sorry for it, sir; but you'll believe me,
When I assure you, that, in penning it,
I never once conceived it necessary
To ask what were his tastes.

Savage. Eh, sir: you did not!

Well, let me tell you, those who know him better,
Are something curious never to offend him.
But you, sir, are a stranger—do not know him
So well as others, born here in Missouri—
And so, he sends me to enlighten you.

Maurice. I thank him, sir.

Savage. Well, you have need to do so;

He does not use such courtesy in common,
But usually the blow before the word !

Maurice. I'm lucky in his new-born courtesy.

Savage. You are, sir ! He's a rough colt, Blasinghame.

Maurice. Kicks, does he ?

Savage. Kicks, sir ! Why do you say kicks ?

Maurice. Surely, no act more proper to a colt.

Savage. You are something literal, sir. I'm glad of it,
Since 'twill be easier to be understood !

Well, sir, I come to you from Blasinghame.

You know not, sir, in taking up this case
Of mother Pressley's, sir, that you are doing
That which, until your coming, not a lawyer
Had done here in Missouri.

Maurice. Shame upon them !

Savage. Shame, say you ? Wherefore, when the right of it
Is all with Blasinghame !

Maurice. Or with his cudgel !

Savage. [*laughs.*] Something in that, too. Well, sir—I say !—

Maurice. Well, sir !

Savage. Now, as you something seem to know already
Of my friend's mode of managing his case,
I need not dwell upon the policy
Of stopping all proceedings ere the trial ;—
In which event I'm authorized to tell you
That Blasinghame forgives your insolent letter,
And spares you as a stranger.

Maurice. Merciful,
As he is powerful ! But what if—having
No such afflicting terror of this person,
So terrible to his neighbours, in mine eyes—
I do reject this liberal grant of mercy.

Savage. Then, sir, I bear his peremptory challenge,

Which leaves you, sir, without alternative,
Takes no apology, no explanation,
And only seeks atonement in your blood. [giving challenge.

Maurice. Or his!

Savage. Or his! But that's no easy matter, sir;
He's fought some thirty duels in his time,
Wing'd nineteen combatants, and slew the rest,
Nor had a scratch himself.

Maurice. Why, he may say,
As Thumb, in the great tragedy—"Enter Thumb,
And slays them all!"

Savage. You mock, sir!—

Maurice. Not a bit, sir!
I marvel only, after hearing you,
That still I have the courage to resist.

Savage. You will not, sir?

Maurice. I fear me that I shall!

Savage. What! you accept the challenge, then?

Maurice. I'll keep it, sir, until this trial's over.

Savage. Beware, sir, of evasion.

Maurice. You, in turn, sir,
Beware of insolence. You have my answer;
When I have gain'd this suit of Widow Pressley,
I'll see to that of Colonel Blasinghame.

Savage. I must have your answer now, or—

Maurice. The door, sir,—
Unless, indeed, you should prefer the window.

Savage. Well! You're a man, that's certain! Give us your
hand.

I'm a rough beast, and like you not the less,
Because you keep a muzzle for the bear;
I *feel* that you will meet with Blasinghame,
And I shall see it. [Shakes hands,

Maurice. Very like you will! [*Exit Savage.*
The game becomes of interest! [*tap within.*

Clarice! [*Opens to her, she enters.*

Clarice. Art busy, Norman?

Maurice. Have been. But,—this lady?—

Clarice. Will you not see her?

Maurice. Not if I can help it.

Clarice. She is my only kinswoman, my husband—
You will not drive her from me?

Maurice. Your only!—

You were *my* only, *Clarice*—I *your* only,
Until her coming! *Only* to each other,
Was the o'erprecious bond that most eudear'd you
To my affections, wife. I cannot suffer
That she should pass between your heart and mine—
She who loves neither.

Clarice. Nay, Norman!

Maurice. Nay, *Clarice*!

This cold, coarse, selfish, this dishonest woman,
Who strove to keep us separate—

Clarice. Her error,
She pleads, was but in a mistaken fondness;
To find a suitor, for her favourite niece,
With better hope of fortune than yourself.

Maurice. Who broke the sacred seal upon our letters,
Mine read,—yours hurried to the flames, unsent—
And would have sold you to this Robert Warren,
My enemy—

Clarice. She confesses all, and weeps!

Maurice. Tcars of the crocodile! Believe them not.
Plead for her nothing more! I tell you, *Clarice*,
I cannot hold my table sure and sacred,
With one so false beside me at the board!—

I cannot yield my home, now pure and peaceful,
To such a treacherous heart as that she carries.
My home is not my home, when doubts of safety
Haunt still my thoughts by day, my dreams by night.
She must go hence !

Clarice. Oh ! husband, pardon her !
She urges abject poverty !

Maurice. More falsehood still !
But we'll provide her;—she shall never suffer,
From cold, or thirst, or hunger, my *Clarice*.
I will to-day seek lodgings in St. Louis ;
To-morrow—

Clarice. But, should her pride ?—

Maurice. She has no right
To nurse her pride at peril of our peace !
No more ! I will not mock her poverty,
Offend her pride, reproach her evil doing—
Will speak her kindly, and will care for her,
So long as I have strength for any care ;—
But will not suffer, for a single moment,
Her shadow on the sunshine of my house. [*Knock without.*
Come in !

Enter Cols. Mercer and Brooks.

Friends, welcome !

[*Clarice curtsies as they bow, and is about to retire.*

Mercer. If we be welcome,
Your lady need not leave us.

Brooks. That which brings us,
Is business of your own, no less than ours,—
A grateful business still, we trust, to you—
Which, doing honour to your worth and virtue,
It may be grateful to your wife to hear.

Clarice. If such its burden, I were glad to linger.

Maurice. Do so, Clarice!—we, gentlemen, are one !
Marriage, with us, fulfils its ample mission,
Making a mutual need for both our hearts ;
Whose sweet dependence knows no other refuge,
Than that which each bestows. It is our fortune,
To have no kindred which may pass between us,
To take from either heart the sweet possession
We hold in one another. But, be seated.

Mercer. Court now in session, sir, your time is precious,
And this great case of yours, 'gainst Blasinghame,
Comes on to-day ?

Maurice. It does.

Mercer. A moment then !
Our friends, sir, conscious of your great endowment,
Assured of your just principles and conduct,
Your sense of public trust and public duty,
Have, with unanimous voice, in a full caucus,
Deputed us to bear you their request,
That you will be our candidate for Senator,
In the next Congress.

Brooks. And we now entreat you,
Suffer this nomination.

Maurice. Friends, believe me,
I feel with proper sense, this compliment ;
And, if my own desire, my young ambition,
Were the sole arbiter to shape my conduct,
Then would I say to you, with hearty frankness,
My wing and eye are set upon the station,
To which your accents now implore my flight.
But, though 'twould give me pride to serve our people,
In any station where their rights are vested,
I have some scruples—

Mercer. Pray deliver them.

Maurice. To be a candidate in common usage,
To take the field and canvas with the voter,
To use or sanction fraud—to buy with money,
Or other bribe, the suffrage of the people—
Is to dishonour them—degrade myself!

Brooks. We ask not this.

Mercer. It needs not.

Maurice. Hear me, sirs.
Our liberties are in the popular vote,
Their best security, the popular heart,
Their noblest triumph in the popular will,—
And this can never be expressed with safety,
Until the unbiass'd voice of public judgement,
Flinging aside each intermediate agent,
Rises, with proper knowledge of its person,
And cries—"Behold our man!"

Mercer. You are our man!
Such is already what is spoken loudly
By thousands in Missouri.

Maurice. I'll not deny it—
If I had one ambition o'er another,
One passion, prompting still a search for pow'r,
'Twas for a station, such as this you show me,
Where, standing on the platform of the nation,
I might stand up for man! And so, my studies,
The books I read, the maxims I examined,—
The laws I conn'd—the models set before me,—
All had some eminence like this in view,
That, with my training, should the occasion offer,
I might be ready still! But, in my progress,—
The better knowledge I have learn'd from men—
My doubts increase—my scruples grow—and now,
A sense of duty prompts me to declare,

Though each fond idol of the ambitious nature,
 Be, from its pedestal, forever thrown,
 I will not seek for office on conditions
 Adverse to right and manhood. I will never
 Become the creature of a selfish party—
 Never use wealth or fraud to rise to pow'r,—
 Never use power itself to keep in power,
 Nor see in him who favour'd my ascent,
 A virtue not his own! Nor can I offer
 One tribute to the vulgar vanity!
 I will not bow, nor smile, nor deference yield,
 Where justice still withholds acknowledgment.

Mercer. We feel the justice of your sentiments.

Brooks. They're needful to us now, when all's corruption.
 Oh! could we but inform the popular mind.

Maurice. This can be done where virtue is the teacher.
 No students learn so quickly as the people.
 They have no cliques to foster—no professions,
 Whose narrow boundaries, and scholastic rules,
 Frown on each novel truth and principle,
 And, where they can, still hunt them down to ruin.
 They take a truth in secret to their hearts,
 And nurse it, till it rises to a law,
 Thenceforth to live forever!

Brooks. We are agreed—
 The people must be taught—what should we teach them?

Maurice. In politics, to know the proper value
 Of the high trusts, the sacred privileges,
 They do confide their statesmen. Show to them,
 On these depend their liberties and lives,
 The safety of their children, and the future!
 To yield such trusts to smiling sycophants,
 Who flatter still the voter's vanity,

At the expense of his most precious fortunes,
Is to betray the land's security ;
To sell the wealth most precious in our keeping,
And, for the thing most worthless, yield to fortune,
What fortune cannot purchase ! We must teach,
That he who cringes meanly for the station,
Will meanly hold him in the nation's eye ;
That he who buys the vote will sell his own ;—
That he, alone, is worthy of the trust,
Who, with the faculty to use it nobly,
Will never sacrifice his manhood for it.
If, with these principles and these resolves,
Thus freely shown you, and invincible,
Our people, through their representatives,
Demand my poor abilities,—'twill glad me,
To yield me at their summons. This implies not
One effort of my own. You, sirs, may make me
A Senator, but not a Candidate.

Mercer. This suits us well. On your own terms we take you ;
We feel with you, a stern necessity
To check the abuse of the Elective Franchise !

Brooks. But should we call a meeting to enlighten
The people, in respect to public measures,
You'll not refuse to meet them ?

Maurice. No, sir, surely !
I still have done so, upon all occasions,
Whene'er a novel principle demanded
Discussion.

Mercer. Thanks, sir ! There will be to-morrow,
A general meeting at the Capitol,
Without respect to party.

Maurice. I will be there !

Brooks. Our quest is satisfied to our desire.

Mercer. We will no longer trespass. Farewell, madam,
Farewell, sir, We shall meet again at Court.

[*Exeunt Mercer and Brooks.*]

Clarice. [*embracing him.*] Husband, you triumph! There
should be no care
Upon your forehead now! Last night, you slept not.

Maurice. And now, *you* dream! But clouds *will* come, Cla-
rice,
Still, with the morrow! Care that flies the forehead,
Still finds a secret shelter in the heart!—
That timid knock!

[*Knock without.*]

Clarice. It is the widow Pressley.

Maurice. [*opening.*] Come in, madam!

[*Enter Widow Pressley and Kate.*]

Widow. Oh! sir, the day has come!

Maurice. That brings you back your property, I trust.

Widow. Alas! sir! You encourage me to hope,—
And yet I fear!

Maurice. It is that we are liable of fear,
That we must hope. If judgment be not erring
No less than justice, madam, mine's a hope
That grows the bolder with each hour of thought.
Be of good heart, dear madam. Check these sorrows,
That wear such needless furrows in your cheeks.

Widow. They're old ones, sir, plough'd twenty years ago.

Maurice. Renew them not!

Widow. And yet, if what I hear!—
Oh, sir! they tell me that this cruel man
Hath sworn a horrible oath against your life,
If he should lose his case.

Maurice. Ah! swears he then!
That looks as if he felt some cause of fear!

Widow. Do not make light of it, I do entreat you!

He's a most desperate ruffian when he's thwarted,
And has the blood of many on his hands !
'Twas said he left the army for his murders,
And in his duels—

Maurice. Let me see,—“ of thirty,
Wing'd nineteen combatants, and slew the rest !”

Clarice. Oh ! horrible ! How can you jest upon it ?

Maurice. I jest !

Clarice. In truth, you smile not !

Maurice. Do not fear !

I do not think that he will murder me.

Clarice. Yet be not rash, my husband ; take precautions,
This weapon— *[hands him a small dagger.]*

Maurice. What ! your dagger, my Clarice,
This pretty Turkish trifle from your bodice,
The blade mosaic—handle wrought in pearl—
The sheath of exquisite morocco, dropp'd
In gold and green ! This ornament for masking,
Were a frail weapon for a man's defence !
Nay, keep your dagger, child, I shall not need it.

Clarice. Be not so confident.

Maurice. Be not so timid !

Who looks for danger surely happens on it !

My papers there ! You go with me, dear madam. *[To widow]*

Widow. Thanks, sir !

There was a time I kept *my* carriage !

Maurice. Be hopeful : you shall keep it once again !

[Aside to Clarice.] I feed this hapless woman with a promise,
Such as it glads me to indulge myself,—
Yet, should I err in judgment !

Clarice. [aside.] Oh ! should you fail !
'Twould break her heart.

Maurice. 'Twere something worse than death!

[*Aside to Clarice.*

But we'll not fail! [*aloud*] The courage born of virtue

Hath still a holy sanction for its hope;

And he who strives with justice on his side,

May boldly challenge fortune for success,

If he be true himself!—*We will not fail!*

The carriage there! Come, madam—for the Court House!

[*Exeunt.*

END OF ACT THIRD.

ACT IV.—SCENE I.

A Garden in the rear of the house of Norman Maurice. Walk through a thick shrubbery. Enter Robert Warren and Mrs. Jervas.

Warren. So ! So ! You heard it all, then ?

Mrs. J. Every syllable.

Warren. Glorious ! But how did you conceal yourself ?

Mrs. J. An ante-room conducts us to the hall

Where they were secretly at conference ;

Thither, when she descended from my chamber,

I softly follow'd. The convenient key-hole

Gave me the means, at once to hear and see them.

Warren. Your foresight shames my thought ! And so, this
Maurice,

Denies that you shall harbour in his dwelling ?

But this you must do ! Your security

Lies in his household only ! He might promise you

Your lodging in St. Louis,—board and clothing—

Ample provision for your state in future—

But once you free his household of your presence,

He whistles you down the wind. No obligation

Would bind him to the care of you hereafter !

Mrs. J. What then ?

Warren. Why, to be sure ! The very thing, dear madam—
Your sickness will not suffer your removal :

Fatigue of travel, grief, anxiety,
Will have their penalties; and your prostration
Is such, that all the world would say 'twas monstrous
To drive you,—you, a stranger in the country,—
The home of the one kinswoman that's left you!
Your notion is a good one! Norman Maurice
Is not the man to urge the matter on you—
An invalid,—with feeble frame,—hot fever—
Confined to bed,—mind somewhat wandering!—
You're right! Methinks you need no counsel, madam.

Mrs. J. I see! 'Twill do!

Warren. 'Tis excellent! So, Maurice
Accepts the Senatorial nomination,
Though still his pride revolts at working for it.
Well! He's not Senator yet. The widow's case
Will bring its perils too; and, at the finish,
I'll interpose to blight his growing glories,
And show him——Hark! a footstep—

Mrs. J. Here she comes!

Warren. Auspicious! Here, away; and, while you leave us,
I'll open a brief conference with her.
Meanwhile, 'tis well you put your scheme in progress;
Take to your bed, and get your nostrums ready;
Spare not your groans and sighs—a little faintness
Might well arrest you suddenly in your speech!
And—but enough. The thicket! Here, away!

[*They retire behind the copse.*]

Enter Clarice.

Clarice. Now all my sorrows sink into the sea,
Since Norman rises to such noble height,
The first in his desert and his desire!
Methinks, till now, I doubted of his fortune,
Nor ever felt secure from sad mischance;

The gibe of envious tongues, the jeer of malice,
The snares of bitter foes, and those dark meshes,
That still the treacherous hands of Warren spread !
These do not fright me now, and, though his presence,
So apt with coming hither of my aunt,
Would seem to shadow forth some evil purpose,
Yet can I not esteem it cause of fear,
Since it were vain for such as he to struggle
Against the noble fortunes of my husband.

Warren. [*coming out behind her.*] Indeed ! and yet the shaft
that slew the lion,

Was but a reed beside the sedgy stream !

Clarice. [*seeing him and starting.*] Ah !

Warren. The little scorpion issuing from the rock,
First slew the steed whose skull he 'habited.

Clarice. Thon here again !

Warren. If but to teach thee in philosophy !—

A pebble in the hand of shepherd slinger,
Smote, so we learn from Sacred History,
The proudest giant in Philistia's ranks.

Clarice. And he whose presence still offends a woman,
But little dreams what champion she may call.

Warren. I knew *your* champion absent ere I ventured.
Your highest pitch of voice, and greatest need,
Would never bring him timely to your succour.

Clarice. What means this threat ?

Warren. It is no threat, Clarice ;—
You will not need a champion when I'm near you.

Clarice. And if I did, methinks, in Robert Warren
I should be loth to seek one ! Why come hither,
My husband's foe, pursuing still his fortunes,
And mine, with bitter malice !

Warren. *Thee* with love !

Clarice. Who wrongs the husband, cannot love the wife!

Warren. Clarice, 'twas in my passionate love for thee,
First grew the passionate hate I bear thy husband!
'Till thou, with fatal beauty, came between us,
He was the twin companion of my pleasures.—
My first associate in each boyish frolic,
We still together went, by hill and valley,
Beside the stream, and through th' untrodden forest,
Having no faith but in our youthful friendship,
No joy, but in the practice shared together.
'Twas thou that changed my kinsman to a rival—
'Twas thou that changed our friendship into hate;
We fell apart, suspecting both, and loathing,
When first our mutual hearts inclined to thee!

Clarice. He did not hate thee—had no jealousy,
But still confided to thee, even his passion;
And thou—alas! audacious that thou art,
How can'st thou still forget that I too know thee,
A traitor to his trust.

Warren. Have I denied it?
I would have won thee from my dearest kinsman.
My treachery to him was truth to thee!

Clarice. And yet 'twas fruitless! Was it not enough
That thou should'st fail? Why now—

Warren. Enough!
Was every passion to be wreck'd forever,
In that which had denial in thy scorn?
With love denied, was vengeance—

Clarice. Vengeance! Ha!
Is it his life thou aim'st at now, or mine?

Warren. Neither!

Clarice. What then? We're separate forever,—
Our lots are cast apart,—our lives divided,—

Why, when no profit comes to thee—no pleasure,
To us, at this dark crossing of our footsteps—
Why art thou here?—Why vex us with thy presence,
To thy own deep defeat?

Warren. In your own thoughts,
Look for the answer to this teeming question.
You know me well—enough of me to know,
Whate'er my vices or deficiencies,
I am no simpleton, but have a cunning
That scarce would keep me profitlessly working,
Still drawing fruitless waters in a sieve!
That I should press upon your husband's footsteps,
Would prove I still had hope of my revenge!
That I should seek thee in thy secret bower,
Would show me still not hopeless of thy love!

Clarice. Oh! vain and insolent man!

Warren. Hold, a little!
If hopeful still of you, 'tis through the prospect
Of vengeance on your husband.

Clarice. Face *him* then!

Warren. You but increase my eager thirst for vengeance,
When you remind me of the frequent struggle,
Which ended in my overthrow and shame.

Clarice. Is't not enough, thus baffled and defeated?—
Why thus encounter still the shame and danger?

Warren. And if my hope lay only in my fortune—
If still my vengeance waited on my strength,
And, to the skill and vigour of mine arm,
I looked to win the vengeance that I covet—
I should forego the conflict, as you counsel,
And leave your world in peace, concealing mine!

Clarice. Well, sir—you pause!

Warren. I would have had your thought

Supply the words of mine; but, as it does not—
Know that I look to other means of vengeance;
Not through my strength, but in his feebleness—
Not in my virtue, but your husband's vices!

Clarice. Oh! hence!

Warren. Yet, hear me! at this very moment
Your husband seeks the pinnacle of power;
He stands conspicuous in the public eye;
The highest place awaits him in the State—
The highest in the nation! At a word,
I can o'erthrow him from his eminence,
Can make his name a by-word and a mock,
Degrade him from his rank, and, with a secret—

Clarice. Shallow and impotent, as base and worthless!—
Hence with your secret! Me can you delude not,
Though you delude yourself. I know this secret!

Warren. What! Your husband's forgery?

Clarice. Your forgery?

Think not to cheat me with your foul contrivance.
You prated of his skill in penmanship—
Defied it,—placed examples in his eye—
And he, confiding—dreaming not that one,
The kinsman who had shared his home and bosom,
Could meditate a falsehood or a crime—
Wrote, at your bidding, sundry names of persons;
And, with these names, without his privity,
Your hand devised the drafts which got the money—
Your hand expended what your guilt procured,
On your own pleasures, in his grievous wrong—
And he hath paid the debt. The fatal papers,
Which might have been a means of his undoing,
Were burned before mine eyes!

Warren. Your eyes deceiv'd you

I'll not deny your story of the fraud ;
 But, for the papers—let me whisper you—
 They were *not* burn'd—they live for evidence—
 Are now in my possession—damning proofs,
 For the conviction still of Norman Maurice.

Clarice. Oh, false as hell ! These eyes beheld them burning

Warren. Hark, in your ear ! What you beheld destroyed,
 Were but the copies of originals,
 The neatly written forgeries of forgeries :
 The originals are mine !

Clarice. Have mercy, Heaven !

What will you do with them ?

Warren. What you determine.

Clarice. What mean you ?

Warren. What ! can you not conjecture ?

Clarice. No, as I live !

Warren. What should I do with them ?

Appease my hatred, pacify my vengeance,—
 Wait till this still triumphant enemy
 Puts foot upon the topmost ring of the ladder,
 Then cut away the lofty props that raise him,
 And let him down to scorn and infamy.
 Another day would make him Senator,
 But that I step between, and show these papers,
 And then the thousand voices in his honour,
 Pursue him with their hiss !

Clarice. Hellish malice !

Oh, if there be a human nature in thee,
 Forbear this vengeance.

Warren. If it pleases thee !

Clarice. How, if it pleases me ?

Warren. See you not yet ?

The alternative is yours to let him perish,

Or win the eminence that still he seeks.

Clarice. Tell me !

Warren. Be mine !

Clarice. [*recoiling.*] Thine !

Warren. Ay ! for nothing less

Than the sweet honey dew that lines thy lips,

The heaven that heaves in thy embracing bosom,

Will I forego this vengeance.

Clarice. God have mercy !

Yet no ! I'll not believe this cruel story ;

Thou hast no papers ! I must see—

Warren. Thou shalt !

Meet me, *Clarice*, at sunset, in yon thicket.

Clarice. I dare not. In yon thicket—

Warren. Dare you, then,

Behold your husband perish ?

Clarice. You but mock.

Warren. Wilt have me swear !

Clarice. What oath would bind a wretch

So profligate in sin ? I will not come !

My husband's honor still defies your arts,

And mine defies your passion.

Warren. You have doomed him !

Clarice. Oh, say not so ! You would not have me madden.

Warren. I swear it ! what I tell you is the truth.—

I have these papers, own this fearful pow'r

Upon his fame and fortune, and will use it—

Clarice. And—if I come ? [*Looking vacantly.*]

Warren. And yie'd you to my passion,

The papers, with the fatal evidence,

Shall all be yours.

Clarice. [*aside.*] Be resolute, my soul !

Heaven help me in this strait and give me courage.

[*Aloud.*] Bring you the papers, Robert Warren ; and—

Warren. [*anxiously.*] You'll come?

Clarice. If I have strength and courage, I will come.

[*Exit Clarice, slowly.*]

Warren. Then mine's a double triumph! Fool!—these papers

Shall serve a twofold purpose: win the treasure,
And yet confound the keeper when he wakes!

[*Exit Warren.*]

SCENE II.

The porch of the Court House of St. Louis. Norman Maurice about to enter, accompanied by the Widow Pressley and Kate, is detained by Mercer upon the threshold.

Mercer. A word with you, if you please.

Maurice. Go in, madam,

And find yourself a seat until I come:

I'll follow soon. [*Widow and child enter.*]

Mercer. This case will keep you late,

And we this evening hold a conference,

Touching the course of the debate to-morrow;—

Were it not better you took bed with us,

And, in the meanwhile, lest your wife grows anxious

Advise her, by a billet, of your purpose?

Maurice. Well thought of. I will do so. [*going.*]

Mercer. Something farther:

Catesby here tells me—but he comes: here, Catesby.

What's this of Savage? [*Enter Catesby.*]

Catesby. [to *Maurice.*] You've won the Savage heart.
It seems that Blasinghame misdoubts your courage,
And, as you gave no reference on his challenge,
Inclines to violence ; and has bid his lambs
Gather about him to behold the sport.

Maurice. Ah, sport !

Catesby. And this in utter scorn of Savage,
Who counselled patience till the time is over,
Fixed by you for your answer. Blasinghame
Growls sullen, and shows Savage a cold shoulder :
'Twas he himself advised that you be watchful.

Maurice. I thank him, and feel grateful to the Savage.
As for this Blasinghame, he'll have need to growl,
When we have done with him. But farther—*Catesby*—
Be you convenient, and, when court is over,
Meet us at Mercer's.

Catesby. I shall stay the trial.

Maurice. Good. Let us in then.

[*Exeunt within.*]

Enter Blasinghame, Savage and others.

Blasinghame. That's enough, Joe Savage.

Savage. Ay, if it answers.

Blasinghame. Answers or not, I tell you, still enough.
Your counsel's something quite unlike yourself.

Savage. And, for that very reason, may be wisdom.

Blasinghame. Perhaps !—but I'm not used to sudden changes.
I will take further counsel with myself.

Savage. Doubtless, to find the way to wise conclusions.
I wash my hands of the business.

Blasinghame. Pray do so !

But, see you Ferguson ?

Savage. He follows us,
Yonder, with Matthews and the stranger, Warren.

Blasinghame. Well, if all fails to bring this Maurice down,
That fellow hath a secret.

Savage. What is it?

Blasinghame. Why, something that should please you,—quite
pacific—

For final overthrow of this man, Maurice :

But let us in. I should be rather anxious,

Having at stake a fortune on this trial.

[*Exeunt within.*]

Enter Ferguson with books and papers, accompanied by Warren.

Warren. You have it all, sir. At the public meeting
You boldly challenge him with forgery,
Call on me to produce the fatal papers,
And summon Richard Osborne to confirm them.

Ferguson. We'll crush him at a blow.

Warren. 'Till then, nothing!
The shame must be complete, beyond recovery.
Let him stretch forth his hand to gain the station,
In sight of all, then, in remediless ruin,
Hurl him down headlong.

Ferguson. You are sure of him—
Your facts—your proofs, your persons?

Warren. Sure as fate!

Ferguson. You will not fail us.

Warren. Would you have me swear?
Have I been wrong'd, and do I hate this Maurice?
Will hate forego the prospect of revenge?
Revenge reject the draught that quenches thirst,
And he who long has dream'd of hidden treasure,
Turn from the golden prize, at last his own?
Not, if the hell that feeds this passion fiercely,
Bestow the needful resolution for it!

Ferguson. And this man, Osborne ?

Warren. He has had his lesson—
He'll answer when you call him.

Ferguson. All then is true ?

Warren. As true as need be for a lawyer's purpose,
As for a foe's.

Ferguson. 'Tis very pitiful—
For, though I like him not, this Norman Maurice
Is still a man of wondrous qualities ;—
But for this lapse from virtue he had been
Most perfect.

Warren. It is well he is not perfect,
Or he had put Humanity to the blush,
By showing, in rough contrast, to her shame,
The meaner value of the coin she carries.

Ferguson. I do not like this business, but our need
Will not permit that we discuss its merits ;—
We'll see you with the morrow.

Warren. With the hour,
That hears your accusation !

Ferguson. Good ! [Exit Ferguson within.]

Warren. Ay, good !
It could not well be better for our purpose.
The mine is sprung, the victim still approaches,
Unconscious, and my hand must fire the train !
But here comes Osborne. I must speak him sternly ;
He cannot silence me with womanish scruples,—
He shall not!—Well, our scheme works famously.

Enter Osborne.

Osborne. Your scheme ; not mine !

Warren. When will your wisdom, Osborne,
Conceive that scheme of mine is scheme of yours,—

Or should be? Now, then, hear our present purpose.
Ferguson brings the charge!

Osborne. What! you have told it?

Warren. Only to him; and he will keep it safely,
'Till comes the proper moment for explosion.
When our young Senator, in public meeting,
Rises to answer to the public summons,
And take the coveted laurel to his brow,
Then will we loose our thunderbolt, whose bursting
Tears him to atoms.

Osborne. What am I to do, then?
What wretched part must I play in this business?

Warren. A minor one, 'tis true, but quite important.
You'll be my echo. When I give the signal,
Confirm my statement and complete our proofs.

Osborne. Are you not under pledges to his wife,
To yield her up these proofs?

Warren. Ay, on conditions.

Osborne. Well!

Warren. What of that? Another means of vengeance!
See you not that I strike him, through her virtue,
But not the less denounce him to the public.
I'll wheedle *her* with a promise to my arms,
Then mock the easy confidence that listen'd
To one she dared despise.

Osborne. Oh, Warren! Warren!
Whither would you carry me—where go yourself?

Warren. To hell, if need be, so I gain my object!—
Achieve the conquest that to me is heaven,
Comprising, as it must, in equal measure,
At once the joys of passion and of hate!
For you—remember, Osborne—no more scruples!

You are mine—soul, body, thought and feeling, mine—
And these shall ply as still my passions counsel,
Or wo betide the rebel.

Osborne. Better slay me !

Warren. Nay, you're not fit to die yet ; nor could serve me
Hereafter, half so usefully as now.

At dusk, I keep the meeting with our beauty,
And thence with Matthews to a secret meeting.
Look for me home at midnight ; and to-morrow—
Remember ! no evasion. Fix'd as fatal,
My will nor brooks dissuasion nor defeat. *[Exit Warren.]*

Osborne. Had I the heart to perish, 'twere less pain,
Than bend beneath this scourge and bear this chain.
[Scene closes.]

SCENE III.

*An apartment in the dwelling of Norman Maurice. Enter
Clarice, reading a note.*

Clarice. Not with me 'till to-morrow ! 'Tis an age !
The first night separate since we were married.
Yet better thus. How could I meet my Norman,
Having this deep concealment in my heart,
Nor shudder with a weight of shame, whose crimson
Would set my cheeks on flame ! How stifle feeling,
To cling in fondness to his manly bosom,
Nor speak the terrible purpose in my heart,
That said, would stifle his. 'Tis better thus !

Enough, that when I meet him—meet him—yes!—
When his dear voice is sounding in mine ears,
Full of the conscious triumphs that await him,
I then may fling myself upon his breast,
And show the dire necessity that made me
The thing I dare not name,—and plead with him,
For each prompt sacrifice of feminine feeling;
The nerve that rose above the woman weakness,
As still the tribute to his fame and safety.
He will forgive—will bless ;—and if he does not!—
Should he recoil from my embrace, and show me
The crimson proof of shame upon my garments,
And cry, “ thy hands, that once were white and spotless,
Are red with guilt :”—but no—I dare not think it.
Let me not look that way. Impossible!
Shall I not, while they threaten, steel my heart,
Against this dread necessity, nor tremble,
Though on the altars of his fame and glory,
I bathe this white and innocent hand in crime!
I shudder, yet I shrink not. Give the power,
God, to this heart, against the coming hour!

SCENE IV.

*Open space before the Court House of St. Louis. Groups of
Lawyers and Citizens.*

1st Lawyer. Didst hear the speech of Maurice in this case?

2nd Lawyer. 'Twas terrible!

1st Lawyer. I never heard the like !
And when he did discourse of Blasinghame,—
His first wrong to the widow—his denial
Of the poor orphan's right—his violence
To those who strove to serve her interests—
The picture that he painted was so monstrous,
That every heart grew cold.

3rd Lawyer. And Blasinghame,
Himself—didst note him ?

2nd Lawyer. 'Twas another picture !

1st Lawyer. He sat a spectacle of ghastly fury,
That had moved pity, could we have forgotten
His looks at the beginning of the case.
At first, how bold he seem'd—with what defiance ;
Next, with what doubt ; then follow'd his dismay—
And last, his fury ; while, with impotent rage,
And something, as it seem'd, of shame and horror,
In his own spite at what the other drew,
He crouch'd at last beneath the terrible scourging,
And half escaped from sight.

2nd Lawyer. I saw him clutching
The panel that he lean'd on, as for help,
While, beaded on his forehead, the big sweat
Still gather'd as it fell ; and, on his lips
The stain of red that mingled with the foam,
Show'd how he had even bitten through his lips,
In his great agony, and knew it not.

1st Lawyer. The Judge has charged the jury ?

2nd Lawyer. He was charging
Just when I left. I could not stand it longer—
As much exhausted at the stern excitement,
As Blasinghame himself.

1st Lawyer. For Ferguson,

The up-hill work was pitiful. To follow,
 With such a case, a speaker such as Maurice,
 Was quite as killing to himself as client.
 No body heard, or cared to hear, his pleading—
 Not even the jury.

2nd Lawyer. What will be the verdict?

1st Lawyer. Why, who can doubt? The insuppressible groan,
 That broke from every breast—the gaze of fury
 That blazed in every eye, when, pointing slowly,
 And shaking with such dire significance,
 The hand of Maurice fix'd on Blasinghame,
 As still, with holy horror in his accents,
 He spoke his wonder, that, with guilt so hideous,
 He still could brave the gaze of man and justice!—
 That groan and glance declared the popular judgment,
 And such will be the verdict.

2nd Lawyer. Hark! that cry—

1st Lawyer. Declares it.

[*Shouts in the porch as the people rush out of the Court House.*]

1st Citizen. Hurrah for Norman Maurice!

2nd Citizen. The widow's friend!

3rd Citizen. The people's man forever!

2nd Lawyer. There speaks the popular heart.

1st Lawyer. A glorious voice,

That makes him Senator.

2nd Lawyer. Hark! he comes forth,

Enter Maurice, with widow Pressley and Kate, followed by Mercer, Brooks, Catesby and others. Shouts.

Widow. Ah! sir. God's blessing on you,—make us happy,
 And take the half of all you've got for us!

Maurice. Not for the world, dear madam! I'll not forfeit
 The pure delight I feel in serving virtue
 For its own sake! In lifting the down-trodden,
 For sake of wrong'd humanity! No more. [*People shout.*]

1st Voice. Hurrah for Norman Maurice!

2nd Voice. The widow's friend!

3rd Voice. The people's man forever!

Maurice. [*to Mercer.*] Let us get hence.

Dear madam, take my carriage,

And bear the grateful tidings to my wife;

Remain with her to-day while I am absent;—

To-night, as still it's like, I shall be absent.

Rejoice her with our triumph. She expects you!

Widow. I have no thanks—no words,—my tongue is frozen.

Maurice. 'Tis that the thaw is wholly at your heart!

Go hence. Escort her, Mercer, to the carriage.

[*Exeunt Widow, Kate and Mercer.*]

Catesby. [*whispering to Maurice.*] Look to it Maurice—here comes Blasinghame!

Enter Blasinghame with others.

Blasinghame. Where is he! Let me see! Ha, give me way!

[*Forces through the crowd, rushes upon Maurice, striking him with a stick.*]

Villain, my blows make answer to thy speech!

Maurice. A blow—and I no weapon! But it needs none—

When, with such powerful passions in my heart,

I feel my sinews fortified with strength,

To drag a thousand tigers to my feet.

Thus, monster, that hast trampled on a people,

Defied their virtues—at their sufferings mock'd—

Thus, with my foot upon thy stubborn neck,

I trample—I degrade thee to the dust! [*Seizes Blasing-*

hame by the throat, hurls him to the ground, and stands upon his neck. Shouts of the people.]

1st Citizen. Hurrah for Norman Maurice!

2nd Citizen. The people's friend!

3rd Citizen. The champion of the widow!

Catesby. [*interposing.*] Enough, sir. Let him rise. I'll whisper him

Where he can find us.

Maurice. Now, within the hour!

[*Catesby and Savage lift Blasinghame.*]

Catesby. Colonel Blasinghame!

Blasinghame. Where is he? Give me way!

Maurice. [*confronting him.*] Here!

Savage. [*interposing.*] Enough of this!

I see! You'll be at Mercer's. [*To M.*]

Maurice. Ay, now!

Savage. No more! Come, Blasinghame.

Blasinghame. You, Joe!

Well, you are true, boy, and I did you wrong.

Forgive me! You will see to this. This man

Hath had his cursed foot upou my neck!

You saw it!—ha! You saw it!

Savage. He will meet you!

Blasinghame. Ha, Joe! Your hand. But when?

Savage. Within the hour!

Blasinghame. Good! See to it. Ha, ha. Methinks—

Savage. No more!—

Away with me at once; you must not linger.

Blasinghame. Methinks I could drink blood. I'm very thirsty

[*Exeunt Blasinghame and Savage.*]

Catesby. Come, let us get in trim. Are you a shot?

Maurice. No!

Catesby. Ah! that's unfortunate!

Maurice. You think so?—

Never you matter, Catesby: I will kill him!

END OF ACT FOURTH.

ACT V.—SCENE I.

A chamber in the house of Col. Mercer. Norman Maurice and Catesby discovered.

Catesby. The challenge comes from Blasinghame. This gives us Advantages, which we should rightly use,
'Gainst one so old in practice.

Maurice. We shall use them :—
The weapon for example. Mine's the small sword.

Catesby. The small sword ! Blasinghame expects the pistol.

Maurice. We have the right in this and other matters ;—
I waive the rest ; but this we must insist on.
'Twas still my fancy, upward from my boyhood,
That, next to lance and spear, the proper weapon
For honourable combat is the sword ;—
Admitting grace of movement and decision,
Allowing still discretion to the champion,—
Obeying all the changes of his temper,
And, as the enemy betrayed his purpose,
Giving him power to spare or slay at pleasure,
Or simply to draw blood and to disarm.

Catesby. You've learn'd to use the weapon ?

Maurice. But a little !
Some confidence, at least, in eye and motion,
Grew from my youthful practice ; and a passage,
With the bright rapiers flashing in the sunlight,
Was ever such a pleasure to my spirit,
That I am half content to risk the duel,

For the excitement of the keen dispute !
'Tis long since I have exercised, but nature
Hath so endow'd me, that a play acquired,
I never yet have lost. 'Tis fortunate,
That I have made provision for this practice,
And have with me two reeds of Milan steel,
In all respects so equal, that a swordsman
Would linger long to choose.—But here comes Savage !

Enter Savage.

Savage. Save you, gentlemen.

Maurice. Your hand, sir. We are ready :
We know your business. Here is Captain Catesby,
Who will discuss with you the needful matters.

Catesby. Our policy demands the immediate issue,
Lest friends or officers should interpose.
Within the hour,—or, at the least, by sunset,
This meeting should be had.

Savage. You cannot have it
Too soon for Blasinghame. You know the man !
Well ! what the weapon ?

Catesby. We shall choose the small sword.

Savage. The small sword ! Why—'tis not the usual weapon

Maurice. As much as any other. France and Poland—
Indeed, most countries of the continent,
Where'er society allows the duel,—
Employ it—

Catesby. And, you know, in Louisiana ?—

Savage. The pistol's the more equal.

Catesby. Were Blasinghame,
Or Maurice, feeble, and the other strong,
That were, perhaps, an argument, but—

Maurice. And, if the question's courage, Major Savage,
As I am told your friend is pleased to make it,
Somewhat at my expense, then, let me tell you,

Cold steel will better try the manly bosom,
Than any decent distance with the pop-gun.
If I remember, Colonel Blasinghame
Hath served in the army, worn the soldier's weapon,
And will not scruple at its use in season.

Savage. Your words decide it:

You have the right—the small sword be it then.

Maurice. [*giving swords.*] Here are two noble weapons—better never

Play'd in the spiral and conflicting circle,
Above the head whose life was made the forfeit
In the delirious conflict. Take them with you ;
Your friend can choose from them, or note the measure
Of that which I employ.

Savage. At sunset, then.

Catesby. The place ?—

Maurice. If you will suffer me—there is,
By Baynton's meadow, a sweet bit of copse,
East of it, through which runs an Indian trail :—
It leads us to a patch of open lawn,
Level, and smooth, and grassy—a fit place
For one to fight, or sleep on !

Savage. Be it there, then.

And now I leave you, gentlemen : an hour
Remains for preparation ere we meet ! [*Exit Savage.*]

Catesby. You are the coolest person—for a person
That never was in combat. You will kill him !

Maurice. Not if I'm cool enough ! I fain would spare him,
Now, that I see him not. But when before me,
And I behold in him the insulting tyrant,
That robs the feeble and defies the strong,
I feel a passionate anger in my heart,
That makes me long to trample him to dust !

Catesby. What more, but seek the surgeon and the carriage?

Maurice. I'm ready when you please.

Catesby. Within the hour! [*Exit Catesby.*]

Maurice. My poor Clarice! she sits beside the window,
And with a vacant spirit still looks forth,
Unthinking, yet still dreaming that I come.
What a long night to both—and that to-morrow!
Well! it will chide her tears, and soothe my sorrow.

[*Scene closes.*]

SCENE II.

The entrance of a thick wood near the dwelling of Norman Maurice. Sunset. Robert Warren discovered.

Warren. The sun is at its set, and yet she comes not.
Can she have faltered—what doth she suspect,—
What fear! It sinks, and hark—her footstep.
Now comes our triumph—now! [*Retires into the wood.*]

Enter Clarice.

Clarice. Oh, if I err,
I that am feeble, and though feeble, loving,—
Devoted, where the sacrifice is needful,—
Willing to die for him whose dear devotion,
Hath made it my religion still to love him—
Oh, God have mercy on the hapless error,
That grows from love's necessities alone!
If in my death his triumph may be certain,
My breast is ready for the knife. I need

No prayer, no prompting to the sacrifice,
That saves him from the wreck of all his hopes,
And honour with them. Let me now not falter !
Forgive me, Heaven, in pity to the weakness
That knows not how to 'scape. If it be crime,—
The deed, which I have brooded o'er, until
My shuddering fancy almost deems it done—
By which I do avoid the loathlier crime ;
Let not the guilt lie heavy on my soul,
As solemnly I do profess myself,
Most free from evil purpose, and most hating
That which meseems the dread necessity
That shadows all my fortune ! God have pity,
And show the way, that still unseen before me,
Lies open for my rescue ! Ha, 'tis he !

Warren. [*reënters.*] Methinks, Clarice, you come reluctantly.
Your husband's fate—the dangers that await him,
That do appear so terrible to me,
Would seem to touch you not.

Clarice. I'll not believe it !
I tell you I must see these fatal papers—
Must feel them—spell and weigh each syllable,
Ere I believe you !

Warren. Said I not you should ?

Clarice. Show me them. I'm here.

Warren. Come hither, then.

Clarice. What ! in the deeper darkness of the wood ?
No ! Here !

Warren. What ! dost forget my recompense ?
Wouldst thou the naked heaven behold our pleasures ?

Clarice. Oh, Heaven ! sustain me ! Let me not go mad ;
That I may hear unmoved this foul assailant,

Nor show, to baffling of my hope and purpose,
The loathing that I feel! [*Aside.*

Warren. The proof is ready—
Wherefore dost thou linger?

Clarice. [*eagerly.*] Ha! then thou hast it—
Here, in thy bosom—here, in yonder wood.

Warren. Even as thou sayest—here, within my bosom;
But 'tis in yonder wood that thou shalt see it.
Behold! [*Takes the papers from his bosom and waves her to the wood.*

Clarice. Give me to see them.

Warren. Yes!

Clarice. But here!

Warren. No—there! [*Waving papers and retiring.*

Clarice. Show me! I come! [*Following.*

Warren. Yet farther. Follow me!

By yon red oak, where the dark thicket spreads,
Where silence, and her twin, security,
Brood ever, and declare for loving hearts
Their meet protection in this lonely shade,—
Thither, Clarice! [*Retires from sight, beckoning with the papers.*

Clarice. Thither, then; I follow thee!

Thou dost implore thy fate! I follow thee
Where shadow and silence both invoke with speech,
Too potent for my feeble pray'r and plaint,
A shadow and a silence yet more deep!
They awfully declare a hideous worship
Where Horror sits supreme, and summons me
To make befitting sacrifice. My soul,
Be firm of purpose now. Nerves do not falter,
When that I do demand your resolute office.
I dare not call on Heaven to help my weakness,

But from the indulgent mercy, born of Heaven,
Implore the saving grace I may not merit.

Warren. [*within.*] Clarice!

Clarice. Ha, then, I come to thee.

Fool! thou entreat'st a Fury to thy arms,
And not a woman. Thou would'st have my love—
Partake of my embrace—my kiss—thou shalt!
My husband—'tis for thee!

Warren. [*within.*] Clarice!

Clarice. He calls me!

I do but answer to his summons! Ha!
Another voice is sounding in mine ears,—
And many voices! One of them is Norman's,—
He calls!—he, too, implores me to the wood!
There will he meet with Warren. If he meets him,
I know what then must happen. I must thither.
His voice again. It sinks into a murmur—
Mixed murmurs follow of a crowd! What is it,
That rolls so dully in my brain, and makes me
Uncertain of my footstep? Oh! the horror
Of this strange weakness! Ha!

Warren. [*Within the wood.*] Clarice!

Clarice. He calls!

Thrice! Thrice! It is decreed. I come—I come! [*Exit within: a moment after a cry of agony, and then a sound as of a falling body. Reënter Clarice with papers in her hand, and garments all bloody.*]

Clarice. Ha, ha, I have them! I could laugh! Ha! ha!—
But for this horrible silence. Yet, I have them!
He would have kept them from me—he. Ha, ha!
But would I suffer him when he threatened Norman,
My husband, with dishonour—my brave husband,
That even now is rising in the nation,

Among the great, in the high places of power,
Ranked with the men most eminent. Dear Norman!
Ha!—ha! I'm very happy now. I have the papers,
The proof, and Norman is made Senator,
Spite of this wretched liar! He'll lie no more.
He wish'd for my embrace, and sure he had it!
Such close embrace, so sharp, so sudden, sweet,
It made him shriek and shrink with such a pleasure,
As men endure not twice. [*Groan within.*]
God! what is that!

A footstep! He pursues me for the papers. [*Thrusts them into
her bosom.*]

He shall not have them. No—I have no papers.
He comes! Home—Norman—Home! Home! Home! my
Norman!
[*Exit wildly, looking behind her as she departs.*]

SCENE III.

The wood behind Baynton's meadow. Enter from opposite sides, Norman Maurice, Catesby, Surgeon; and Colonel Blasinghame, Savage, Surgeon.

Savage. Can nothing reconcile our parties, Catesby?

Catesby. The invitation to the field is yours:
Yours still must be each overture for peace.

Savage. What will content you, Blasinghame?

Blasinghame. His blood!

Savage. [*to Catesby.*] I'm sorry, but you hear?

Catesby. To business, then.

Maurice is at his post, so, place your man.

[*Maurice and Blasinghame confront each other.*]

Maurice. Art ready, sir?

Blasinghame. For vengeance! You have foil'd me—
Disgraced me in the eyes of all our people,
So, look to it, for by the God that made me,
I'll write my living tortures on your heart!

Maurice. Your blood upon your head!

[*They fight. Maurice disarms him.*]

Blasinghame. Curse on the weapon!

Maurice. Curse not the weapon!—curse the hand, the heart—
The cause,—which have betrayed you;—not the weapon!
Your life is at my mercy!

Blasinghame. [*folding his arms.*] Take it, then!
I would not live dishonoured. You may slay me,
But cannot conquer me.—My breast is open!

Maurice. I will not slay you. I *will* conquer you.
Your life is mine. I give it you. Live on,
A wiser and a better man hereafter.

Blasinghame. [*tottering and turning away.*] My strength is
gone from me; my heart is crush'd.
Look, Savage,—these are tears, and not of blood.
Come with me, for I falter. [*Going.*]

Savage. [*to Maurice.*] You're a man
Among ten thousand, Maurice. Now, forgive him.
He weeps. The strong man weeps.—I must go with him,
But know me for your friend.

[*Exit Savage following Blasinghame.*]

Catesby. 'Twas nobly done.

When I consider Blasinghame's career,
His brutal murders, his long tyrannies,
The provocation you have had to slay him—

I marvel that you spared him. Sir, your triumph
Is now without alloy.

Maurice. I'm glad you think so;
Yet deem the merit of forbearance small.
Had he been bolder, I had never spared him;
But could not strike him when, with folded arms,
He stood to meet the stroke. But—let's to Mercer.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

The Chamber of Richard Osborne. Enter to him Harry Matthews.

Matthews. Where's Warren?

Osborne. I've not seen him.

Matthews. Not since when?

Osborne. Noon yesterday.

Matthews. Indeed. 'Twas then we parted.
He promised to meet with me last night at Baylor's.

Osborne. And came not?

Matthews. No. 'Twas probable his business—
For you must know his hands are full at present—
Was quite too grateful and too full of profit,
To make him leave it soon. I marvel'd not
That he should fail us *then*; but now, this morning,
When, by agreement, he should breakfast with us—
And here's the hour—that he should still be absent,
Seems something strange. He must be at the meeting,
Or we are done forever.

Osborne. What's the meeting?

Matthews. One of both parties, meant for caucussing,
Popular wholly in its character.
Whose temper will determine our Assembly
As to its choice of Senator in Congress.

Osborne. Ay,—Indeed.

Matthews. You'll be there?

Osborne. Yes; I promised him.

Matthews. Who? Warren?

Osborne. Yes.

Matthews. I must go look for him.
We must not risk our fortunes by delay.
His voice may help to make our Senator. [*Ex. Matt.*

Osborne. Would he were dumb or I! Alas! these murmurs,
How feeble—since the fetters are about me,
And but one way remains—to curse and perish. [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

The open street. Ferguson and Matthews.

Ferguson. What quest was that, I pray?

Matthews. [*smiling.*] I must not tell it—
A lady's in the secret.

Ferguson. Keep it then.

But give yourself no farther care for Warren.
His last words, when we parted yesterday,
Implied his absence 'till the latest moment.
He'll be with us to-day, when we are ready.

Matthews. 'Twill do no harm at least to hurry him.

Ferguson. Have you seen Blasinghame?

Matthews. This morning? No.

Ferguson. You know not he and Maurice fought at sunset?

Matthews. Indeed! How did they fight?

Ferguson. With swords.

Matthews. What then?

Ferguson. Why, Maurice had him at his mercy!

Matthews. And spared his life?

Ferguson. He did, but had been much more merciful
To have taken it,—for he has crushed the other!

Matthews. How! Blasinghame!

Ferguson. Has withered in a night.

Matthews. Good Heaven! Impossible! What! Imbecile!

Ferguson. He stares in vacancy—his hair's grown white,—
He trembles as with palsy, and he weeps,
Even as an infant!

Matthews. What a change is this!

Ferguson. He's useless to us now; and Savage grows
More friendly now to Maurice than to me.

Matthews. This Maurice wrecks us all.

Ferguson. But, in an hour,—
Let Warren be but faithful to his pledges,
And we shall see his vessel in a tempest,
Such as no bark can weather.

Matthews. Be it so—
My breath shall not be wanting to the blow!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

The interior of the City Hall of St. Louis. A raised platform in the centre. Citizens crowding about it. Chairman presiding and seated with other distinguished men. On one hand, Ferguson and others—opposite, Norman Maurice, Mercer, Brooks, &c. Norman Maurice discovered speaking.

Maurice. Thus have we, sir, discussed the several questions
Involved in this upon the Constitution—
I trust that, on this instrument, I speak
The doctrines of Missouri. I would have it
A ligament of fix'd, unchanging value,
Maintained by strict construction,—neither warp'd,
Nor stretch'd, nor lopt of it's now fair proportions,
By the ambitious demagogue or statesman,
Who, with the baits of station in their eyes,
Still sacrifice the State! Our policy,
Should hold ours as a link'd realm of nations
Where each one sits secure, however feeble,
And, pointing to the sacred written record,
Finds in it her Palladium. Government,
We hold to be the creature of our need,
Having no power but where necessity,
Still under guidance of the Charter, gives it.
Our taxes raised to meet our exigence,
And not for waste or favourites—our people
Left free to share the commerce of the world,
Without one needless barrier on their prows!
Our industry at liberty for venture,
Neither abridged, nor pamper'd; and no calling

Preferr'd before another, to the ruin,
Or wrong of either. These, sir, are my doctrines !
They are the only doctrines which shall keep us
From anarchy, and that worst peril yet,
That threatens to dissever, in the tempest,
That married harmony of hope with power,
Which keeps our starry union o'er the storm,
And, in the sacred bond that links our fortunes,
Makes us defy its thunders !—Thus, in one,—
The foreign despot threatens us in vain.
Guizot and Palmerston may fret to see us
Grasping the empires which they vainly covet
And stretching forth our trident o'er the seas,
In rivalry with Britain. They may chafe,
But cannot chain us. Balances of power,
Framed by corrupt and cunning monarchists,
Weigh none of our possessions ; and the seasons
That mark our mighty progress, East and West,
Show Europe's struggling millions, fondly seeking,
The better shores and shelters that are ours.
Enough, sir—I have yielded my opinions,
Freely delivered, frankly argued, fairly,
With deference to the learning and the wisdom,
Shown by my opponent ! The rest is yours.

Chairman. You have heard, citizens ; what farther order
Is it your pleasure, that we—

Mercer. Sir, it needs not !—
The ample range that this debate hath taken,
The spacious grasp of argument upon it—
How well discussed the questions—how complete
And clear, the several reasons which concluded,—
Leave none in doubt of what should be our judgment.
Methinks there's but one matter now before us,

And th's decided, stays the whole discussion,—
By showing, in our preference for the man,
What still hath been our thoughts upon his measures.
Well have the advocates on both sides spoken,
Not equally, but well! For Ferguson,
His eloquence honours his experience past,
And ancient reputation ;—but, methinks,
That none who listened to the speech of Maurice,
But must have yielded to his clear opinions ;—
Enforced by illustrations near and foreign,
Such full analysis, such profound research—
Statements so fairly made,—objections battled
So fearlessly—and arguments sustained
With so much equal truth and eloquence !
His views are mine—are those of this assembly !
Nay more—I boldly challenge in their favour,
The voices of Missouri! What remains—
But that we speak to her assembled wisdom ?
This day they choose a Senator in Congress—
Whom shall we name to them of all our people ?

1st Voice. Why, Norman Maurice !

2nd Voice. Who but Norman Maurice ?

3rd Voice. The widow's friend—the champion of the people !

Brooks. Such is the popular will !

Ferguson. A moment, sir !

If eloquence and talent, just opinion,
Were the sole requisite, for this high station,
I should be silent here, or probably,
Join with you in the shout for Norman Maurice.
But truth and virtue claim a place with talent,
And he who serves, our Senator in Congress,
Must know no smutch of shame upon his garments.

Maurice. Ha ! shame, sir ?

Ferguson. That was the word, sir.

Maurice. Shame of mine ?

Ferguson. Of thine !

Maurice. Speak, sir ; I listen.

Ferguson. It is charged, sir,
That Norman Maurice, ere he sought St. Louis,
Was once a resident of Philadelphia ;
That there he forged a paper on a merchant,
Well known, by which he gain'd two thousand dollars !

Maurice. A falsehood ! false as hell ! As God's in Heaven,
I never did this thing !

Ferguson. The proof is here !

Maurice. The proof ! What proof ?

Ferguson. Know you one Robert Warren ?
Ha ! you are silent, sir—you start, you redden !—

Maurice. With scorn and indignation, not with terror !
I do know Robert Warren ; that base reptile
Whom thrice I spared the scourge. Set him before me
And you shall see whose tremors speak the guilty,
And whose the innocent, aroused to vengeance !

Ferguson. Have then your wish ! Accuser ! Robert Warren !
Stand forth and answer ! [Pause.

Maurice. He dare not !

Ferguson. He will !

Maurice. Shout for your man again. Set him before me.

Ferguson. Call at the door, there—call for Robert Warren.

Voice without. Ho ! Robert Warren, Robert Warren ! Ho !

[Enter Harry Matthews hastily, and in great agitation,]

Matthews. Who calls for Robert Warren ? He is murder'd,—
Stabb'd with a dagger, and was found a corse,
Within the wood behind the house of Maurice.
Here is the dagger, found upon the body,
And crusted with his blood. [Showing dagger.

Maurice. Murdered ! Give it me ! [*Seizes the dagger, looks at and drops it.*]

Great God ! 'tis hers ! [*Aside.*]

Matthews. Behold the murderer !

He staggers ! It is he hath done the deed !

Ferguson. Ay, truly,—who so like to do the deed,
As one who needs to silence such a witness.

Maurice. Thy bitter jealousy and hate delude thee,
And make thee but a liar. I convict thee,
Out of the mouths of thine own witnesses.—
When saw you Warren last ? [*To Matthews.*]

Matthews. Noon yesterday :

He left me then to seek *your* house.

Maurice. *My house !*

What would he at my house ?

Matthews. I do not know.

But know that from that hour until the present,
When now we find him by your house a corse,
He has no more been seen.

Maurice. 'Tis fortunate,
That we may get the truth from fraud and cunning,
Even when it makes against them. Noon yesterday
Found me in public court-house, on a trial,
Before a thousand eyes, 'till four o'clock !

Ferguson. But after that ?

Maurice. My witness here is Mercer.

Mercer. From that hour

'Till sunset, he continued at my house,
Then left with Captain Catesby, to return
With dark, and to remain with us all night,
Most part in consultation with our friends
Who did not separate until near the dawn.

Ferguson. Then, 'till this hour ?

Catesby. With me! We slept together!

Maurice. Man of a bitter malice, art thou answer'd?

Ferguson. Thou 'scapest the murder, not the forgery.

Warren was not the only evidence;

Where's Richard Osborne?

Osborne. [*Coming forward.*] Here!

Ferguson. All do not fail us!

Your name is Richard Osborne? You know Maurice,
And know the crime which Warren charged upon him?
He named you as his witness.

Osborne. He did wrong, then!

I know of no offence of Norman Maurice—

Yet know him well, and all I know of him,

Hath still approved him, to my sense and judgment,

The noblest, as he is the first of men!

1. *People shout.* Hurrah for that!

2. *People shout.* Hurrah for Norman Maurice!

Ferguson. Confusion!

Matthews. I'm off. [*Exeunt Matthews and Ferguson.*]

People. [*with cries and hisses.*] Away with Ferguson!

Mercer. [*to Maurice.*] Your triumph is complete!

Brooks. All's well!

Maurice. Tell me that!—

All's well!—You spoke! Did you not say, my wife?

What of her—Speak!

Mercer. You're ill! Your lips are very pale!

But courage, all your trial's over now.

Maurice. Art sure of that? Let me but understand it!—

Mercer. 'Twould seem so!—What a foul conspiracy,
So fatally arrested. For this murder—

Maurice. What of it?

Mercer. 'Tis very strange!

Maurice. Very strange indeed!

Mercer. But stranger still the audacious charge against you.
Who was this Warren?

Maurice. [*with an effort.*] Who? but here is one,
To put you in possession of the story.
He knows how dexterously a lie was founded,
Most monstrous, on the basis of a truth,
By this same Warren, to my injury. [*Osborne comes forward.*
Osborne, I thank you for your ready answer,
And good opinion.

Osborne. It was but your right.

Maurice. What is that cry? my fears. [*Noise without.*

Enter Kate, followed by Mrs. Jervas.

Kate. Oh! Sir! Your wife!

Maurice. My wife! Be still my heart. What of my wife?

Kate. She's sick. O! very sick!

Mrs. Jervas. She's broke a blood vessel!

Maurice. [*with a cry.*] God! thou hast sent
This Terror, like a fate into my house,
And wreck'd the hope that nestled there in peace!—
Hence, woman, from my sight!

My wife! my wife! [*Rushes out.*

Mercer. [*to Catesby.*] Follow him with a surgeon.

Brooks. What a day's history of storm and sorrow!
There is some cruel mystery in these doings,
Which we must fathom! This conspiracy,
For such it clearly shows, makes for our party;
Let's hasten to the use of it. They'll never
Hold up their heads again. The people's with us,
The assembly waits us and will crown our triumph!

SCENE VII.

A chamber in the house of Norman Maurice. Clarice reclines upon a couch. The widow Pressley stands at a little distance watching her.

Widow. Dear lady, you will die.

Clarice. Do not come near me!

Widow. You bleed! You suffocate!

Clarice. And still he comes not.

You promised me to send for him. Oh, God—
Should they behold these papers. Ha! I hear him.

Do you hear nothing?

Widow. Nothing!

Clarice. I hear! 'Tis he!

Maurice. [*without.*] Clarice! my wife!

Enter Norman Maurice.

Maurice. Speak! Tell me! Where!—Clarice. [*seeing her.*

Clarice. Oh! now you come! Heaven bless! I'm dying,
Norman!

[*Raises herself feebly to his arms.*

Maurice. Dying!

Clarice. I feel it; but——

Maurice. The surgeon! God of Heaven,—

Clarice. He cannot help me now. Too late! no succour,—
I've but the words for blessing and farewell!—
I'm sinking;—but you're safe! Safe! Oh! the rapture,
To know it, and to whisper in your ears,
With the last loving words. He would have crush'd you—
Made infamous your name, my noble husband;
But stoop,—your ear—he'll trouble us no more.

He's silent—and I have the fatal papers ;—
 No copies—all the originals.—Ha ! Ha !—
 They're here—now take me,—closer—to your heart ;
 I leave you—lose you—Norman. Ah ! your lips,—
 How cold, but sweet, my Norman—cold—sweet Heaven. [*Dies.*

Maurice. Now sink my soul !—since the bright star is gone,
 That made thy life and glory from the heavens—
 That stored thee with all blessings. I am crushed !
 Ha ! what are these ! (*lays her down gently—the papers fall*
 Oh, God ! I see it all. *from her bosom.*

Oh, bloody wretch, whose nature was a lie,
 This was thy work,—not hers. 'Tis plain before me.
 My poor Clarice ! how faithful unto death,
 Shielding me at the peril of thyself,
 And, in the seeming dread necessity,
 Doing the deed that from its delicate props,
 Shook the fair fabric of thy innocent life !
 My wife ! My wife. [*Sinks down.*

[*Noise and voices without.*]

People. Hurrah for Norman Maurice !

Enter Mercer, Brooks and others.

Mercer. Maurice, my friend, we triumph. You are Senator
 For the next term, in Congress, from Missouri.

Maurice. Could'st wake her with thy tidings !

Mercer. God ! This is death !

Maurice. It lies upon her silent lips like snow.
 Oh ! do not speak—she hears not ! why should I ?
 Nor sorrow, nor joy shall fill these frozen eyes,
 That see not me. She would have listened once,
 How gladly,—and found music in the triumph,
 That now can bring me none. My wife ! My wife !

THE END.

CAIUS MARIUS;
AN HISTORICAL LEGEND.

CAIUS MARIUS;

AN HISTORICAL LEGEND.

I.

The Dungeon of Minturnæ.

MARIUS. THE CIMBRIAN.

Marius. What art thou, wretch, that, in the darkness com'st,
The midnight of this prison, with sly step,
Most fit for the assassin, and bared dagger
Gleaming in thy lifted grasp!

Cimbrian. I am sent by those
Whose needs demand thy death. A single stroke
Sets us both free forever—thou from Fate,
Me from Captivity.

Marius. Slave, hast thou heart
To strike at that of Marius!

Cimbrian That voice—that name—
Disarm me; and those fearful eyes that roll,
Like red stars in the darkness, fill my soul
With awe that stays my hand. Master of the world,
The conqueror of my people hast thou been,—
I know thee as a Fate! I cannot harm thee.

Marius. Go to thy senders, and from Marius say,
That, if they bare the weapon for my breast,
Let them send hither one who has not yet
Looked in a master's eye. 'Tis not decreed
That I shall perish yet, or by such hands
As gather in Minturnæ. Get thee hence !

II.

Public Hall of Minturnæ.

MAGISTRATES. THE CIMBRIAN. AUGUR.

Cimbrian. I cannot slay this man. Give me to strike
Some baser victim, or restore to me
My chains. I cannot purchase, at such price,
The freedom that I covet.

Magistrate. Yet this man
Conquered thy people.

Cimbrian. He hath conquered me !

Augur. And he must conquer still !
His hour is not yet come. The Fates reserve
His weapon for their service. They have need
Of his avenging ministry, to purge
The world of its corruptions. I behold
A fearful vision of the terrible deeds
That wait upon his arm. Let him go free.
Give him due homage ; clothe him with fresh robes ;
Speed him in secret, with a chosen bark,
To other shores. So shall your city 'scape
Rome's wrath, and his hereafter.

Magistrate. It is well :
This counsel looks like wisdom.
Augur. It is more !
So the Gods speak through their interpreter.
Magistrate. Release him straightway—send him forth in
honour ;
We give him freedom—let the Gods give safety.

III.

Island of Ænaria.

MARIUS. CETHEGUS.

Cethegus. Thou hast slept, Marius.
Marius. And thou hast watched my sleep ;
Ah ! truest friend and follower, not in vain !
Dismiss that cloudy trouble from thy brows,
Those doubts that vex thy heart ; for know that Fate
Still hath me in its keeping, and decrees
Yet other deeds and conquests at my hand,
And still one glorious triumph. I shall be
Once more, in Rome, a Consul ! When a child,
Sporting on summer slopes, beneath old hills,
Seven infant eagles, from a passing cloud,
Dropt clustering in my lap. The Augurs thence
Gave me seven times the Roman Consulate.

Cethegus. Thou'st had it six.

Marius. One other yet remains.

Cethegus. Alas ! the Fates but mock thee with a dream ;

For know that, while thou slept'st, our treacherous bark
Loosed sail, and left the shores.

Marius. Gone!

Cethegus. Clean from sight.

Marius. Ha! ha! Now thank the Gods that watch my sleep,
And save me when the might of man would fail!
Courage, my friend, that vessel speeds to wreck,
Racked on some lurking rock beneath the wave,
Or foundering in the tempest. We are safe!

Cethegus. Thou'rt confident.

Marius. As Fate and Hope can make me.
Yet look! there is an omen. We must fly
This place, for other refuge. See the strife
Betwixt these deadly scorpions on the sands.

Cethegus. What read'st thou in this omen?

Marius. Sylla's soldiers
Are fast upon our heels. Get to the shore;
Some fisher's boat will help us from the land,
And bear us whither the directing Fates
Decree for refuge—safely o'er the seas
That gulph our treacherous vessel.

Cethegus. Be it so!
I follow thee whatever be thy fate!

Marius. Hark! dost thou hear?

Cethegus. What sound?

Marius. The tramp of horse;
And lo! the boat awaits us by the shore!

IV.

Marius, alone, seated, among the Ruins of Carthage.

1

Alone, but not a captive—not o'ercome
By any fate, and reckless of its doom—
Even midst the ruins by his own hand made,
There sits the Exile, lone, but unafraid !
What mighty thoughts, that will not be repressed,
Warm his wild mood, and swell his labouring breast ?—
What glorious memories of the immortal strife,
Which gave him fame, and took from Carthage life ;
That giant-like, sea rival of his own
Proud realm, still challenging the sway and throne ;
Doomed in long conflict, through experience dread,
To bend the neck at last, to bow the head ;
To feel his foot upon her lordly brow,
And yield to him who shares her ruins now !

2

How, o'er his soul, with passions still that gushed,
The wondrous past with all its memories rushed ;
These ruins make his monument. They told
Of wisest strategy, adventure bold,
Dread fields of strife—an issue doubtful long,
That tried his genius, and approved it strong ;
That left him robed in conquest, and supreme,
His country's boast, his deeds her brightest theme ;
Written in brass and marble—sung in strains
That warm the blood to dances in the veins ;
That make young hearts with wild ambition thrill,

And crown the spirit with achieving will ;
That seem eternal in the deeds they show,
And waken echoes that survive below ;
Brood o'er the mortal, slumbering in the tomb,
And keep his name in song, his works in bloom,
Till envious rivals, hopeless of pursuit,
Join in the homage, who till then were mute ;
Catch up the glorious anthem, and unite
To sing the bird they could not match in flight ;
Content to honour where they can not shame,
And praise the worth they can not rob of fame.

3

How, with these memories gathering in his breast,
Of all the labours that denied him rest—
Of all the triumphs that his country bore
To heights of fame she had not won before—
Broods he, the exile, from his state and home,
On what awaits thee and himself, O Rome !
Of what thy hate deserves, and his decrees,
Whom thou hast brought unwilling to his knees.
No sad submission yields he to his fate,
So long as solace comes to him from hate,
Or hope from vengeance. In his eyes, ye trace
No single look to recompense disgrace ;
With no ambition checked, no passion hushed,
No pride o'erthrown, no fond delusion crushed ;
With every fire alive that ever swayed,
His soul as lordly as when most obeyed,
He broods o'er wrongs, forgetful of his own,
And from his heart hears vengeance cry alone.
Fixed on the ruins round him, his dread eye
Glares, as if fastened on his enemy ;

His hand is on the fragment of a shrine
That Hate may henceforth deem a thing divine ;
Grasped firmly—could the fingers but declare
How dread the oath the soul is heard to swear !
The awful purpose, nursed within, denies
Speech to the lips, but lightens up the eyes,
Informs each feeling with the deadliest will,
But, till the murderous moment, bids “be still !”

4

Come read, ye ministers of Fate, the lore
That fills the dark soul of the fiend ye bore ;
Reveal the secret purpose that inspires
That deadly mood, and kindles all its fires ;
Scan the dread meaning in that viperous glance
Fixed on those ruins in intensest trance,
Which nothing speaks to that it still surveys,
And looks within, alone, with meaning gaze ;
Unclose that lip, that, rigidly compressed,
Stops the free rush of feeling from the breast ;
And, on that brow, with seven deep furrows bound,
Write the full record of his thought profound.
What future scene beneath that piercing eye
Depicts the carnage and the victory ;
The flashing steel—the shaft in fury sped—
The shrieking victim, and the trampled dead ?
Say, what wild sounds have spelled the eager ear,
That stretches wide, the grateful strain to hear ;
How many thousands perish in that cry
That fills his bloody sense with melody ?
What pleading voices, stifling as they swell,
Declare the vengeance gratified too well ?
What lordly neck, beneath that iron tread,

Strangled in utterance, leaves the prayer unsaid?
What horrid scene of triumph and of hate,
Do ye discover to this man of Fate,
Which, while his Fortune mocks the hope he bears,
Consoles his Past, and still his Future cheers?

5

He hath no speech, save in the ruins round;
But there's a language born without a sound,
A voice whose thunders, though unuttered, fly
From the red lightnings of the deep-set eye;
There passion speaks of hate that cannot spare,
Still tearing those that taught him how to tear;
One dream alone delighting his desire, }
The dream that finds the fuel for his fire;
Let fancy shape the language for his mood,
And speak the purpose burning in his blood.

V.

Marius. "If thou hadst ears, O Carthage! for the voice
That speaks among thy ruins, it would cheer
The spirit that was crushed beneath my heel,
To hear the tongue of thy destroyer swear
To live as thy avenger. I have striven
For Rome against thee, till, in frequent strife,
Thy might was overthrown—thy might as great
As Rome's in days most palmy, save in this:
Thou hadst no soul as potent in thy service,

As I have been in hers. And thou, and all—
The Gaul, the Goth, the Cimbrian—all the tribes
That swelled the northern torrents, and brought down,
Yearly, the volumed avalanche on Rome—
Have sunk beneath my arm, until, secure,
She sat aloft in majesty, seven-throned,
And knew or feared no foe. This was my work—
Nor this alone ; from the patrician sway,
That used her as the creature of his will,
I plucked her eagles, casting down his power
Beneath plebeian footstep. For long years
Of cruellest oppression and misrule,
I took a merited vengeance on her pride,
Debasing her great sons, that, in their fall,
Her people might be men. I loved her tribes,
Since they were mine. I made their homes secure ;
I raised their free condition into state—
And I am here ! These ruins speak for me—
An exile—scarred with honourable wounds,
At seventy years, alone and desolate !

“ But the o’er-ruling Deities decree
My triumph. From thy ruins comes a voice
Full of most sweet assurance. Hark ! it cries,
To me, as thy avenger. Thou forgiv’st
My hand the evil it hath wrought on thee,
That the same hand, upon thy conqueror’s head
May work like ruin. The atoning Fates
Speak through thy desolation. They declare
That I shall tread the ungrateful city’s streets,
Armed with keen weapon and consuming fire,
And still unglutted rage. My wrath shall sow
The seeds of future ruins in her heart,

So that her fall, if far less swift than thine,
Shall be yet more complete. She shall consume
With more protracted suffering. She shall pass
Through thousand ordeals of the strife and storm,
Each bitterer than the last—each worse than thine—
A dying that shall linger with its pain,
Its dread anxieties, its torturing scourge,
A period long as life, with life prolonged,
Only for dire, deserved miseries.
Her state shall fluctuate through successive years,
With now great shows of pride—with arrogance
That goes before destruction—that her fall
May more increase her shame. The future grows—
Dread characters, as written on a wall—
In fiery lines before me; and I read
The rise of thousands who shall follow me,
Each emulous of vengeance fell as mine,
By mine at first begotten. Yet, why gaze
In profitless survey of the work of years,
Inevitable to the prescient soul,
And leave our own undone? I hear a voice
Reproaching me that I am slow to vengeance;
Me, whom the Fates but spare a few short hours,
That I may open paths to other masters,
For whom they find the scourge. They tutor me
That mine's a present mission; not for me
To traverse the wide future, in pursuit
Of those who shall succeed me in their service,
But to speed onward in the work of terror,
So that no hungering Fate, the victim ready,
Shall be defrauded of its prey. I rise,
Obeying the deep voice that, from these ruins,
Rings on mine ear its purpose. I obey,

And bound to my performance as the lion,
Long crouching in his jungle, who, at last,
Sees the devoted nigh. The impatient blood
Rounds with red circle all that fills mine eye;
A crimson sea receives me, and I tread
In billows, thus incarnadined, from nations
That bleed through ages thus at every vein.
Be satisfied, ye Fates! Ye gods, who still
Lurk, homeless, in these ruins that ye once
Made sacred as abodes, and deemed secure,—
I take the sword of vengeance that ye proffer,
And swear myself your soldier. I will go,
And with each footstep on some mighty neck,
Shall work your full revenge, nor forfeit mine!
Dost thou not feel my presence, like a cloud,
Before my coming, Rome?* Is not my spirit,
That goes abroad in earnest of my purpose,
Upon thy slumbers, City of the Tyrant,
Like the fell hag on breast of midnight sleeper,
That loads him with despair? Alone, I come;
But thousands of fell ministers shall crowd
About me, with their service—willing creatures
That shall assist me first to work on thee,
And last upon themselves! The daylight fades,
And night belongs to vengeance. I depart,
Carthage, to riot on thy conqueror's heart."

* The reader will be reminded by this passage, of that noble and solemn speech made by the Ghost of Sylla, at the opening of Ben Johnson's tragedy of Cataline: "Dost thou not feel me, Rome," etc.

VI.

Silent once more the ruins—dark the night,
Yet vengeance speeds with unembarrassed flight ;
No fears delay, no toils retard the speed
Of that fierce exile, sworn to deadliest deed ;
And thou, O Queen of Empires, now secure
Of state that might be peaceful, were it pure,
Too soon thy halls shall echo with the yell
That summons human fiends to works of hell !
Ambition, long unsated, urged by Hate,
Queen of the Nations, speaks thy mournful fate ;
Thy valour wasted, and thy might in vain,
Thy virtues sapped to break thy despot's chain !
Long didst thou rule, in simple courage strong,
The guardian friend of right, the foe to wrong ;
Great in thyself, and conscious of the sway
That kept meet progress with the march of day ;
That, from all nations plucked the achieving arts,
Which make sway sov'reign in a people's hearts ;
Proud on thy heights rose forms to worship dear,
There swelled the temple's crest, the column there,
Each with its chronicle to spell the soul,
And each most precious to the crowning whole ;
A world thyself—a wondrous world—that made
The admiring nations silent in thy shade ;
Genius and Art commingling in thy cause,
And Gods presiding o'er thy matchless laws.

VII.

But dark the hour impends—the storm is nigh,
And thy proud eagles flaunt no more the sky ;
Thou hast not kept thy virtues to the last,
And all thy glories centre in thy past—
Thy safety in thy glories. From beneath
Thine altars swells the midnight cry of death ;
The tocsin summons—not to brave the foe,
But to make bare thy bosom to the blow ;
From thy own quiver flies the shaft of doom,
And thy own children hollow out thy tomb.
The exulting shouts that mock thee in thy shame,
Were those that led thee once to heights of fame :
The bird that swoops to riot on thy breast,
Is the same eagle that made great thy nest.
Hark ! at his shrilly scream, the sleuth-hounds wake,
The bloody thirst which in thy heart they slake ;
Thy proud patricians, hunted down, survey
The herds they kept, most busy with the prey.
These are the flocks they fostered from their foes,
And these are first to drink the blood that flows.
Wondrous the arts of vengeance, to inspire
The maddened son to prey upon the sire !
Wondrous the skill *that* fierce plebeian wields
To make this last the bloodiest of his fields.
Vain all thy prayer and struggle—thou art down—
His iron footstep planted on thy crown ;
But in thy fate, 'tis something for thy pride,
Thus self-destroyed, thou mighty suicide !

BERTRAM;

AN ITALIAN SKETCH.

BERTRAM.

AN ITALIAN SKETCH.

I.

SCENE: *The Dungeon of Bertram in the Castle of Leoni*

LEONI. BERTRAM.

Leoni. Thou sleep'st as one who hath no fear—no grief!

Bertram. As one who hath no fear; and, for my griefs,
That they permit me sleep at such an hour,
Would show them much more merciful than thee.

Leoni. I, too, am merciful—will bring thee sleep,
So deep, as will shut out all sense of grief
From thy unlabouring senses.

Bertram. Be it soon!

Leoni. Is this thy prayer?

Bertram. Dost ask?

Leoni. Enough! Then hear!

To-morrow thou shalt have no charge in life—
The fair sky shall reject thee; the bright sun
Lend thee no succour—and the wooing breeze
That sweeps so sweetly through yon window grate,
Shall only stir the long grass on thy grave!
Dost hear what I have spoken? Thou shalt die!

Bertram. 'Tis well !

Leoni. No more ?

Bertram. What more wouldst have ? Thy power
To which I may oppose nor prayer nor pleading,
Needs not my vain acknowledgment of grief ;—
And fears I have none.

Leoni. Is all sense of hope
Utterly dead within thee ? Does no dream
Rise up before thy fancies, fraught with pleasure,
That life prolonged may bring thee—happiest hours,
In sunshine or in shade—such as thy bosom
Was once most blest to dream of ? Thou hast been
A very bird of the summer, in thy flight,
No less than music. Thou couldst clip the air
With ever glad embraces ; couldst delight
The groves with the spring sweetness of thy song,
And fed'st on all the flowery fields of life,
With never satiate appetite and hope !—
Is thy privation nothing ?—the great loss
Of the things visible and glorious, thou
Hast ever sought with such a fresh delight ?
The woods and waters—this fair earth and sky,
Glowing in birds and blossoms ; and the night
Proud in its starred luxuriance ; and that moon,
Whose pallid disc looks mournful through yon bars,
As if to yield thee sympathy. Awhile,
Her beams will gleam upon thy silent grave,
And seek thee through the grasses on its slopes,
And thou know nothing.

Bertram. Be it as thou say'st.

Leoni. I tell thee, by the morrow thou shalt sleep
I' the iron grasp of death.

Bertram. One word for all !

Time ceased with me to-day—and in *her* grave
Sleep all my earthly morrows.

Leoni. Obdurate!

Yet would a prayer become thee.

Bertram. Not to thee!

My prayers are not for life—nor yet for death—
And, if for mercy, but to Him, whose power
Leads through the awful future, in whose shadows
I see no sway of thine! Thou could'st not answer
To any prayer I make thee.

Leoni. Not for life?

Bertram. No!

Life were no mercy now. The light which made
My life on earth, now beckons through the gates
Which thou may'st ope, not shut! Thou hast o'erstept
The limits of thy policy. Thy power,
That smote too soon the victim in thy grasp,
Forever lost its sway, in the foul blow,
That rather spoke the madness of thy hate,
Than made its purpose sure. For prayer of mine,
Invoking life for *me*, denied to *her*,
Thou wait'st but vainly. Not to mock thy power
Do I condemn thy mercy; but that blessing
Were now no boon to me. I hear the doom
Thy lips have spoken, and I welcome it!—
Will meet it with no struggle and no prayer,
But, in such meek humility of heart—
Not reft of every hope—which best becomes
These bonds, this weakness—conscious that I breathe
In thy forbearance only. Let the axe
Be sharpened and in readiness—the neck
Is bared, and bent already, for the blow!

Leoni. Die in thy pride! I would have wrung the prayer

From thy unnatural bosom, to deny thee ;
Would first have moved thee to an abject homage,
That shame, as well as death, might fasten on thee,
Defiling thy past honours ; and have shown thee,
Clipping with eager arms about my knees,
While my feet tramp thee to the kindred dust
Which stains thy insolent forehead.

Bertram. Oh ! I know thee !

Leoni. Thou know'st me ! Well ! it needs not that I tell
thee,
Thy doom is written ! With the sun, thou diest !
[*Exit Leoni.*

II.

BERTRAM—*solus.*

Bertram. I will not shame his brightness ! He will blaze
For other seasons. He will bring their fruits,
And cheer to song the throats of merry birds,
And ripen yellow harvests for the race,
In multitudinous lands ; and I shall lose
These joys, which never failed till now to gladden
This weary heart of mine ! But now their sweets
Bring me no hope ; nor, with their sweets denied,
Do I feel loss. 'Twas in her love that grew
The season's bounty—and the glorious smile
That blessed me in the rising of the sun,
And cheered me in the music of the bird,

And charmed me in the beauty of the flower,
And taught me, in the fragrance-blessing earth,
The way to countless blessings, which no more
I find in earth or sky, in song of birds,
Beauty in flowers, or glory in the day !
My day is night: my prayer is for that sleep
That sees no more the day from which is gone
The soul's one beauty, giving charm to all !
Nor is the night which now approacheth fast—
Through which my feet must go—the final night,
Whose coming makes men falter, with a fear
That, in th' unknown still dreads the worst of knowledge—
Without its welcoming light ! I have o'ercome
The natural fears of Death, who, in our youth,
Must ever be a Terror ! Doubt and dread
Grow passive, in that weariness of soul
When life maintains no hope ; and death puts on
The aspect of a friend to him who feels
How toilsome and how endless is the day
Consumed without a quest, through barren realms
That Love hath ceased to brighten with his beams,
Or freshen with his flowers. My woes, that brought
Despair for one dread season, and dismay
That still o'erwhelms my heart, hath also taught
Elsewhere to seek the Comforter ! And Fear,
That found on earth but Tyranny, beyond,
Looks upward for protection. He whom Power
Drives from the shelter of the Throne, finds strength
In the more steadfast Altar ; and the man,
Who knew no safety with his kindred fellow,
Soon finds the need of Him, who, throned apart,
Repairs the wretched sorrows of the race,—
Rebukes the injustice—from the oppressor plucks

The scourge—and to the victim, soon or late,
Atones for the worst sufferings borne on earth.
Oh ! Death shall be no pang, though sharp his blow ;—
And loss of life, however glad before
In bloom and blossom, bring no sorrow now !

And yet, to tread that passage of thick gloom
Into the world of doubt ! To take that plunge,
From consciousness, to the bewildering change
Which may be wo, or apathy still worse,
In loss of that large consciousness, whose hope
Clings to the soul as to its only life,
Secure in joyous certainty of wings,—
High powers, that yield not to the outward pressure,
And, with the will, ne'er-pausing progress keep
To the mind's best achievements ! Oh ! that doubt !—
Whether, in passage from the state we know,
We rise elsewhere erect, or grow to nothing ;
Never know waking—with one pang lose feeling ;
Lose, with the sky and earth, all sense and seeing—
The *all* that we have lived for—while the loved one,
Most precious to the heart of all affections,
Lies silently beside us, and we know not !—
Hushed each divinest instinct that, while living,
Taught us, unseen, of the approaching footstep,
And, with a breath, infusing still the zephyr,
Quickened each pulse within the trembling bosom
With intimations of that precious spirit
So natural to our own. Oh ! my Francesca !
Where glid'st thou ?—through what region, breathing glory—
Through what sweet gardens of delight and treasure,—
That I behold thee not ?—and drink no promise
Of what awaits me in the world hereafter,

From the sweet whispers of thy passing spirit,
 Stealing beside me ? Thou art freed the struggle,
 And, in the unlimited province of thy wing,
 Why fly'st thou far ?—why bring'st me no sweet tidings
 To strengthen the dear hope that gave us courage
 When we were torn asunder—made us fearless
 Of all the tyrant might decree against us—
 Assured of that blest future which his power
 Might never enter ? Wert thou nigh—about me—
 Infusing with thy sweetness the damp vapour
 That chills this gloomy dungeon—I had known it !
 My soul had felt thy presence, as one gathers
 The scent of flowers that grow in foreign gardens,
 Whose blooms he doth not see ! Didst thou look on me,
 I should not droop this hour. Oh ! wouldst thou speak,
 I should not feel this dungeon—dread this death—
 That, in thy absence from my spirit now—
 Thine freed—takes on a shape of daring darkness,
 That never hopes a dawn ! Who comes ? [*Enter Friar*

III.

FRIAR. BERTRAM.

Friar. My son !

Bertram. Art thou mine executioner ?

Friar. Thy saviour rather—

If I might execute upon thy pride,

Thy sinful thoughts and passions, and thy fears,

By bringing thee, in penitence and sorrow,
To the white feet of Him who came to save,
And perished, for thy safety, on the cross !
Oh, son ! the moments leave thee. A few hours,
Is all the remnant of the time allowed thee.
I would prepare thee for the terrible change
The morrow brings thee—would entreat thy prayers—
The meek repentance of thy evil passions,
And not less evil thoughts—and such confession
Of each foul secret festering in thy soul,
With the due sorrows which should follow it,
As may command thee to the Saviour's grace,
And make thee fit for the Eternal Presence !

Bertram. Behold me then most guilty. Pride was mine,
And sinful thoughts, and dark imaginings,
And reckless passions, and ungracious faucies,
And all the thousand tendencies to evil
Which ever urge the impatient soul of man
To heedless forfeiture of Heaven's sweet mercy.
What need the dark detail—the nice relation—
The name and character of each offence,
Too numerous quite for name, for recollection—
Too foul for the now blushing consciousness
To summon into sight, or give to speech !
Enough, that I have sinned—that, in my sorrow,
I could weep tears of blood ; and that I perish
Forgiving all mine enemies—imploring,
Of all, forgiveness—and of God, o'er all !—
Most doubtful of his mercy, as well knowing
How great mine undesert.

Friar. Alas ! my son,
This will not answer thee. Thou must disburden
Thy heart of each dark secret. 'Tis thy pride,

And not the shame and grief of thy contrition
That locks thy secret up!

Bertram. I have no secrets
From God, to whom for judgment I must go;
No hope from man, of whom I have no fear,
And no confession for his ears, whose judgment
Can do me hurt or service now no more.

Friar. Beware, my son! This stubbornness! This woman—
Francesca—who hath perished in her guilt—
She was to thee no wife? Her full confession—

Bertram. Ah! now I know thee! Get thee to Leoni:
I have no secrets for thy keeping, father,
Or thy revealing. Yet a prayer I make thee;
Leave me to God—in quiet.

Friar. If I leave thee—
Thy conscience unrelieved—the truth unspoken—
I leave thee to the enemy of man,
Who lurks in waiting for thy soul—

Bertram. Away!

Friar. The curse—

Bertram. Oh! fit for curses only—hence!
Thou hast usurped the white wings of the dove,
To do the serpent's office! Who is there?

[*Enter Francesca.*

IV.

FRANCESCA. BERTRAM. FRIAR.

Bertram. Ah! now is Heaven most merciful! She comes!
She glides, a form of light, athwart the darkness;

I see her radiant beauties, starred by Heaven
With supernatural brightness; and I feel
The lightness of a breath, that's balm for angels,
Uplift me as with wings! Oh! blessed being,
That hallowest where thou com'st—how doth thy presence
Prepare me for the sacrifice. One moment;
I shut mine eyes in doubt! I open them,
Once more to rapture! Dost thou see, old man?
Thy lips had spoken curses as from Heaven—
Lo! now, its angel!

Francesca. [to the Friar.] Hence, father, to Leoni.

Bertram. Leoni! Can she speak of him—Leoni!

Francesca. [to the Friar.] He summons thee! He needs
thee! Hence with speed!

Friar. Then hast thou answered wisely. All goes well!
I leave thee.

Francesca. [to the Friar.] Hence! [Exit Friar.]

V.

FRANCESCA. BERTRAM.

Bertram. Is it Francesca speaks—
And speaks she of Leoni? Thou wert mine,
Francesca—and in robes elect of heaven,
Speak'st thou of him who was thy enemy,
As he is mine? I tremble, with a dread,
That tears my very heart-strings! Oh! Francesca
Pure spirit of the purest of earth's mortals,

Speak, and uplift me, with a voice of mercy,
From this dark sphere to thine.

Francesca. Bertram !

Bertram. That name !

Which still was the dear burthen of thy lips
When thou wast mine, and mortal—still to me sounds
As thou hast ever said it. There's no change,
To eye or ear, in thee. Oh, heart ! be hopeful ;
Since death makes free the living to their mission,
Nor robs the loved one of those precious beauties,
That fashioned thought and sense, and fiery passion,
To one sweet frame of love !

Francesca. Dost think me dead,
Dear Bertram ?

Bertram. Dead, my Francesca—dead to earth—
But O ! not dead to me ! They showed thee to me,
Even through these grates, arrayed in innocent white,
And robed as for a bridal with the stars,
In pure white blossoming flowers.

Francesca. They mocked thine eyes,
As they have mocked my ears. I am not dead . . .
I live as thou hast known me. I am thine,
As still I was before ; but, rouse thee briefly,
For we have little space. Reserve thy wonder
Till we go hence in safety. We must fly—
While the dread baron sleeps. Leoni sleeps—
Sleeps soundly ! I have left his bed but now !

Bertram. Thou ! Left *his* bed but now !

Francesca. Marvel not, Bertram,
However marvellous all seemings be
That check us in this dungeon. Thou shalt know
The dark, dread truth hereafter.

Bertram. Left *his* bed !

His bed! The lustful murderer—the foul satyr,
 Whose very eye but taints the thing it looks on,
 Whose every breath is incense of pollution,
 Whose every touch is sin! Oh God! I hearken
 And live! He lives! . . . She lives! Francesca—mine!—
 All live! Yet hath she left his bed but now!—
 Death! death! O friend! where art thou? I had lost
 The sense of fear! I lived but for one hope—
 That the short, rapid interval of time
 'Twixt this impatient consciousness, and that
 Which made my faith assurance absolute,
 Of life with thee hereafter—would be o'er,
 With but one shock—one moment of thick darkness—
 And then all light and rapture!—and I wake,
 To feel the scorpion sting of agony,
 That tells me of the death that follows death,
 In which all hope lies buried—smothered sure
 In loss of that most precious of life's fancies,
 Its dream of the pure angel, whit'st of all
 Above the cloudy confines of the grave,
 Waiting with welcome! Death! O, death! O, terror!
 That I should live for this!—that thou should'st tell me
 Francesca, with no crimson on thy cheek,
 No gushing eyes, no husky, tremulous voice,
 That thou com'st freshly from Leoni's bed,
 No longer fresh—yet living! [*Falls on his face.*]

Francesca. Were thy fears—
 Thy dark suspicions true, O! cruel Bertram,
 How vain were tears or tremours, conscious blushes,
 Or all the broken agonies of speech,
 To show my shame or thine!

Bertram. Yet didst thou leave
 Leoni's bed but now! Thy own lips said it,
 Nor faltered in the speech.

Francesca. Oh ! had I left
My virtues on his bed, there had been need
For faltering and for tears. I left his bed,
But left no living bed, my Bertram ! No !
Look on this dagger—let it speak for me !

Bertram. It bleeds—it drops with blood, The crimson edges
Gleam brightly dark before me. O ! Francesca,
I see what thou hast done—yet, do not say it !
I feel the terrible need that stood before thee,
And comprehend the fate that forced upon thee,
The dreadful stroke of death. And yet, Francesca,
I would it had been any hand but thine
To do this deed ! [*Covering his eyes.*

Francesca. Thy life was on it, Bertram—
And mine—and something more to me than life ;
And, in my soul, a voice that cried—“ Be cruel,
Or thou art lost to Bertram and to Heaven ! ”
Thou hat'st—thou fear'st me ! Ah ! I see it, Bertram !

Bertram. Hate thee, Francesca ? No ! How much I love
thee,
No words may speak. Yet there's a deadly horror
That shakes my frame—that seizes on my heart !
Look how thy hand is crimsoned !—up thine arm,
Even to thine elbow, drips the clotting current !
God ! what a terrible stroke ! *Thou* didst *not* do't—
Thou, once so gentle, whom a wounded sparrow
Had brought to feminine sorrows. Thou hast wept
The fate of the cucuyo when I brushed it,
To loss of wing and glitter from thy garments ;
And not a beggar's babe, with plaint of hunger,
But, with thy bounty, won a boon of tears,
Sweet as the angels weep o'er woes of mortals ;

And thou to strike this blow ! I'll not believe it ;
Some other hand than thine, Francesca !

Francesca. Mine !

Mine only, Bertram. Do not curse or chide me ;
Turn not thy face away. 'Twas for thy safety.

Bertram. As if Death had one terror in his keeping,
To wound a fear of mine !

Francesca. Yet, have a thought
Of poor Francesca's danger. See her struggles,
At midnight, in the darkness, with her tyrant ;
That bold, bad man, with all his power around him !
Hear her wild shrieks, which all refused to hear :
How vain were all her pleadings ! How the danger
Threatened the whiteness of her innocent bosom,
That knew no claim but thine ; and think how madly
The spasms of fear and horror in my soul
Impelled the deadly weapon to the heart,
Grown viperous with its lusts—its snakes about me
Ready to sting with deathsome leprosies !
Oh ! think of this, my Bertram !

Bertram. My Francesca,
Dost think I blame thee ! 'Twas a fate that made thee
Thus stern and fearful ; yet, to me, thy beauties
Were those of meekness only. In mine eyes,
Thy mould was still of those celestial beings
That find their virtues in their tenderness,
Chastened by love to purity. All passions
Grew modest in thy presence. Every feeling
That ministered to make thy loveliness,
Seemed to have had its birth in angel meekness,
That spread a hallowing moonlight at its coming,
Making the rugged soft. How could I know thee,
Thus terribly incarnadined with vengeance

For any purpose ! Could I dream of thee,
Thus robed in crimson horrors, and believe thee
The pure white thing thou wast, when first I found thee
In groves of green Val d' Arno, singing sweetly,
With eyes of dewy glist'ning, to pale sisters
That watched above in fondness ? Oh ! thy nature
Hath been o'erwrought to madness ! May I fold thee
Once more to this lone bosom, and remember
The thing thou wast, but art not ?

Francesca. Let me save thee,
Even though I lose thee, Bertram.

Bertram. Lose me, never !
The flight that saves thy Bertram—

Francesca. Saves not me,
Since thus he holds me altered—if he alters
In the dear faith he gave me. The worst death
Grows up before me, though we fly together,
In these so foreign glances—in this speech,
That tells how much he loses in the change
That outraged what I was, and, in my terrors,
Made me achieve the deed, however needful,
That makes me thus a terror to his love.
Yet must we fly. These keys undo thy fetters—
See how they fall about thee ! Rouse thee, Bertram !
Thy hands, thy feet are free. Thy tyrant sleeps,
No more to cross thy fortunes ; and Francesca,
If stained with blood, is pure for thee, as ever
In happy vale of Arno. Yet I ask not
That thou shouldst deem me so—that thou shouldst love me,
As then, in those sweet hours.

Bertram. I've done thee wrong
By this ungrateful chiding. I will take thee,
As all confiding to this hopeful bosom

As when thy hands were innocently white.
We'll fly together. I am thine, Francesca,
Never to wrong thy hearing with a thought
That love may deem rebuke. Let us away!

Francesca. (aside.) Yet is the thought the shadow to the
soul,

Though never shown by speech. My doom is written
In the deep horror which his spirit feels,
At what this hand hath done. O! in the future,
I see the icy dread—I hear the accent
That speaks the chilled affection—forced and idle,
As born no more of fondness. I must perish,
In the denial of the love which made me,
At first, a breathing woman. I must perish;
Yet, to the last, in loving him I cherish
The hope, that when the icebolt falls between
Our lives, our hearts shall reunite once more,
And death retrieve the whiteness life hath lost.

Bertram. Why lingerest thou, Francesca?

Francesca. But for prayer!—

Heaven's mercy may be yielded to our flight
If not our hearts. Dear Bertram, let me lead thee;
But take the dagger—I will bear the keys!

Bertram. Oh! give it me; far better graced in mine,
Than in thy hands, Francesca. Give it me!
Oh, heart! 'tis my infirmity that speaks—
But I could easier strike a host of hearts,
Than see it in thy grasp! And yet, Francesca,
I would not wrong thee by reproach. Thy danger
Made the dread weapon a necessity
Thou couldst not 'scape, and shouldst not. Let my arm
Enfold thee; and should danger threaten now,
Thine eye shall see this arm more red than thine,
In shielding thy white bosom.

Francesca. (timidly.) May I hold
Thy hand, my Bertram?

Bertram. Heart and hand, Francesca. [Embracing.

Francesca. Now could I go to death!

Bertram. We go to life,
To love and safety, dear one!

Francesca. (aside.) Through a night,
Where all is cloud before me, never-lifting
Till the last cloud descends. O! love no longer,
As once we knew it—wings and sunniness,
With music in the pauses of the breeze,
While leaves drop down in odors; but a love
That chills while it embraces—and sweet accents
That never warm to meaning.

Bertram. What say'st thou?

Francesca. Of cold and darkness, Bertram.

Bertram. Soon, the light
Will gather round us with its cheerful aspects,
That smile among the stars; and Heaven's fresh breathings—
'Scaped from the pestilent atmosphere of death—
Will lift our spirits with a glad surprise.
The bolts unclose! O! see you not, Francesca,
How swiftly darts the messenger of light,
As glad to do us service, o'er the threshold,
And waves his glow-worm torch to guide us on;
While the fond zephyr, through the yawning portal,
Wraps us in sweet embrace, and bears us forward,
On wings made free like his. Come forth, Francesca.

Francesca. (faltering.) Whither?

Bertram. To life—from death!—Dost see?

Francesca. The blessed stars!

Bertram. Now fly we with the urgent feet of fear;
This valley must not hold us. To our hills:

There we may breathe in safety. But thou shrink'st!

Francesca. The light! They see—the stars! These bloody proofs—

Bertram. (*averting his eyes.*) And I—alas!

Francesca. Lead where thou wilt, my Bertram.

Bertram. Among the hills! I know where runs a brooklet,
Shall cleanse thee of these stains—Jesu! how black!

Francesca. How black! how black! (*aside.*) Alas! the stream
may cleanse—

The arm be white once more as when he took it,
To wrap about his breast!—but O! my heart,
The dread impression fastened on his soul,
Leaves only night to mine! I follow, Bertram!

Bertram. (*aside.*) How terrible! How had she heart for it!
So fearful, even in her innocent ways,
So tender still, and merciful!

Francesca. Thou speak'st?

Bertram. Of the great debt I owe thee—of the struggle
That nerved thee to this blow! And yet, Francesca,
Would we had died before—together died—
Even at the moment when our lips first met,
In love's first sweet delirium!

Francesca. Thou art right!

Would we had died, O, Bertram! in that hour,
And had not lived for this!—Would I had died!

THE DEATH OF CLEOPATRA.

THE DEATH OF CLEOPATRA.

Guard. What work is here? Charmian, is this well done?

Charmian. It is well done, and fitting for a princess,
Descended of so many royal kings.—SHAKESPEARE.

AUGUSTUS CÆSAR. DOLABELLA.

Augustus. Dead! say'st thou? Cleopatra?

Dolabella. She sleeps fast—

Will answer nothing more—hath no more lusts
For passion to persuade—nor art to breed
Any more combats. I have seen her laid—
As for a bridal—in a pomp of charms,
That mocked the flashing jewels in her crown
With beauty never theirs. Her bridegroom one
Who conquers more than Cæsar—a grim lord
Now in the full'st possession of his prize,
Who riots on her sweets; seals with cold kiss
The precious caskets of her eyes, that late
Held—baiting fond desire with hope of spoil—
Most glorious gems of life; and, on her cheek,
Soft still with downy ripeness—not so pale,
As sudden gush of fancy in the heart
Might bring to virgin consciousness—he lays
His icy lip, that fails to cause her shrink

From the unknown soliciting. Her sleep
Dreams nothing of the embrace, the very last
Her eager and luxurious form may know,
Of that dread ravisher.

Augustus. If it be true,
She still hath baffled me. My conquest sure—
My triumph incomplete! I had borne her else,
The proudest trophy of a myriad spoil,
In royal state to Rome. Give me to know
The manner of her death.

Dolabella. By her own hands!—
That, conscious still, commended to her breast
The fatal kiss of Nile's envenomed asp;
That subtle adder, which, from slime and heat,
Receives a gift of poison, whose least touch
Is a sure stoppage of the living tides.

Augustus. Her death commends her more than all her life!
'Twas like a queen—fit finish to a state,
That, in its worst excess, passionate and wild,
Had still a pomp of majesty, too proud
For mortal subjugation! She had lusts
Most profligate of harm—but with a soul,
That, under laws of more restraint, had raised
Her passions into powers, which might have borne
Best fruits for the possessor. They have wrought
Much evil to her nature; but her heart
Cherished within a yearning sense of love
That did not always fail; and, where she set
The eye of her affections, her fast faith
Kept the close bond of obligation sure.
This still should serve, when censure grows most free,
To sanctify her fault. In common things
Majestic, as in matters of more state,

She had, besides, the feminine arts to make
Her very lusts seem noble ; and, with charms
That mocked all mortal rivalry, she knew
To dress the profligate graces in her gift—
Generous to very wantonness, and free
Of bounty, where Desert might nothing claim—
That Virtue's self might doubt of her own shape,
So lovely grew her counterfeit. O'er all,
Her splendour, and her soul's magnificence.
The pomp that crowned her state—luxurious shows—
Where Beauty, grown subservient to a sway
That made Art her first vassal—these, so twinned
With her voluptuous weakness—did become
Her well, and took from her the hideous hues
That else had made men loathe !

I would have seen

This princess ere she died ! How looks she now ?

Dolabella. As one who lives but sleeps ; no change to move
The doubts of him who sees, yet nothing knows,
Of that sly, subtle enemy, which still
Keeps harbour round her heart. Charmian, her maid,
Had, ere I entered, lidded up the eyes,
That had no longer office ; and she lay,
With each sweet feature harmonizing still,
As truly with the nature as at first,
When Beauty's wide-world wonder she went forth
Spelling both art and worship ! Never did sleep
More slumberous, more infant-like, give forth
Its delicate breathings. You might see the hair
Wave, in stray ringlets, as the downy breath
Lapsed through the parted lips ; and dream the leaf,
Torn from the rose and laid upon her mouth,
Was wafted by that zephyr of the soul

That still kept watch within—waiting on life
In ever anxious ministry. Lips and brow—
The one most sweetly parted as for song—
The other smooth and bright, even as the pearls
That, woven in fruit-like clusters, hung above,
Starring the raven curtains of her hair—
Declared such calm of happiness as never
Her passionate life had known. No show of pain—
No writhed muscle—no distorted cheek—
Deformed the beautiful picture of repose,
Or spoke th' unequal struggle, when fond life
Strives with its dread antipathy. Her limbs
Lay pliant, with composure, on the couch,
Whose draperies loosely fell about her form,
With gentle flow, and natural fold on fold,
Proof of no difficult conflict. There had been,
Perchance, one pang of terror, when she gave
Free access to her terrible enemy ;
Or, in the moment when the venomous chill
Went sudden to her heart ; for, from her neck,
The silken robes had parted. The white breast
Lay half revealed, save where the affluent hair
Streamed over it in thick disheveled folds,
That asked no further care. Oh ! to behold !—
With eye still piercing to the sweet recess,
Where rose each gentle slope, that seemed to swell
Beneath mine eye, as conscious of my gaze,
And throbbing with emotion soft as strange,
Of love akin to fear ! Thus swelling still,
Like little billows on some happy sea,
They sudden seemed to freeze, as if the life
Grew cold when all was loveliest. One blue vein
Skirted the white curl of each heaving wave,

A tint from some sweet sunbow, such as life
Flings ever on the cold domain of death ;
And, at their equal heights, two ruby crests—
Two yet unopened buds from the same flower—
Borne upward by the billows rising yet,
Grew into petrified gems !—with each an eye
Eloquent pleading to the passionate heart,
For all of love it knows ! Alas ! the mock !
That Death should mask himself with loveliness,
And Beauty have no voice, in such an hour,
To warn its eager worshipper. I saw—
And straight forgot, in joy of what I saw,
What still I knew—that Death was in my sight,—
And what was seeming beautiful, was but
The twilight—the brief interval betwixt
The glorious day and darkness. I had kissed
The wooing bliss before me ; but, even then,
Crawled forth the venomous reptile from the folds
Where still it harboured—crawled across that shrine
Of Beauty's best perfections, which, meseemed,
To shrink and shudder 'neath its loathly march,
Instinct, with all the horrors at my heart.

Augustus. Thus Guilt and Shame deform the Beautiful !

